Thoughts for The Christian Year.

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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

THOUGHTS

FOR

THE CHRISTIAN YEAR

BY

CAROLINE FRANCES LITTLE

AUTHOR OF "THE THREE VOCATIONS," AND "LITTLE WINTER-GREEN"

WITH A PREFACE

BY

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PRESIDENT OF NASHOTAH

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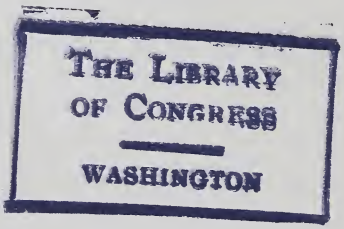

PREFACE

The number of those who are trying to practise regularly the kind of prayer called meditation is on the increase. Spiritual guides, therefore, are more frequently called upon to advise with their people as to what helps to meditation they shall use. There are some persons who have gathered for themselves material for thought and prayer; but there are many who must turn to the reflections of others if they would meditate profitably. And so it is, that every book of the nature of spiritual exercises that is presented is very welcome, especially to those of the clergy who are constantly asking themselves, What shall I recommend? What will be adapted to the needs and capacity of this individual child of God?

Every new line of thought suggested for the prayer of meditation is also most welcome; for there may be such a thing as fruitless monotony in this form of devotion. Because of what we are in our constitution, variety is helpful even in respect of the direction and matter of our prayer.

No apology, therefore, is necessary for offering these "Thoughts" to Christian people. Already they have come into the hands of a large number of persons, through the columns of *The Living Church* newspaper; and because many have found them helpful they are published in book form in order that they may help a still greater number.

The writer of these "Thoughts," who is well known by name to many American churchmen, has asked me to add this brief preface to her work, hoping that the clergy may thus be assured by a brother priest that the tone of the book is Churchly and Catholic and that

it may be placed among those books of meditation which they can safely recommend.

To follow the Church's services week by week, gathering out of them what is the mind of the Church, and to meditate on the facts of our religion in that order in which the Church has arranged them must surely result in great good to many souls. That the number may be increased of those who sit at the feet of Mother Church to learn what her mind and thought is, and who also will make her thoughts their prayer is my sincere wish in thus recommending this book.

W. R. Gardner.

Nashotah,
Feast of the Purification,
1896.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

In preparing these "Thoughts for the Christian Year," all but one of which have appeared in *The Living Church*, I have been greatly indebted to the writings of Bishop Wilkinson, Dr. Pusey, the Rev. Edward L. Cutts, the Rev. John Keble, Cardinal Newman, Sir Edwin Arnold, James Baldwin Brown, and many other writers of prominence.

C. F. L.

Brooklyn, New York,
Lent, 1896.

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THOUGHTS
FOR
THE CHRISTIAN YEAR

CHAPTER I.

ADVENT

"He's faithfu', that hath promised, He'll surely
come agen,
He'll keep His tryst wi' me, at what hour I dinna
ken;
But He bids me still to watch, an' ready aye
to be,
To gang at ony moment to my ain countree.

"So I'm watching, aye, an' singing o' my hame as
I wait
For the souning of His footfa' this side the
gowden gate,
God gie His grace to ilk, an' wha listens noo
to me,
That we may gang in gladness to our ain
countree."

Such is the beauty and symmetry of the Christian Year, that all the events of our Lord's Life, and all doctrines necessary for the

soul's salvation, are, in it, yearly presented to the hearts and minds of her children by Holy Church. As the season of Advent recurs, the teachings concerning our Lord's second appearing come with new power. We daily pray, "Thy kingdom come," in the Lord's Prayer; and express our belief in His second Coming, in our Creeds, and when the Holy Eucharist is offered, the priest says: "And did institute, and in His Holy Gospel command us to continue, a perpetual memory of that His Precious Death and Sacrifice, until His coming again," and thus we are constantly reminded of that glorious day; yet, the Church in an especial way emphasizes at this season the second Advent of our Lord.

The thoughts suggested at this time are threefold. First, the greatest fact in the past history of the world, namely, that the Lord Jesus Christ took upon Him our flesh, came into this world, and thereby redeemed it. Second, that after appearing on earth, He appeared in heaven, in the real Holy of Holies (of which the Jewish temple was a symbol), clad in our humanity, and there ever intercedes for us, and yet is in the Church until the

end of time. The third thought is that greatest event for the future, even that He will come again in all His glory, Lord of lords and King of kings, to take His chosen to Himself, and to judge the world. Very graphically does St. Paul explain these three appearings in the ninth chapter of Hebrews. First He appeared in the little town of Bethlehem, "to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself;" then He entered "into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us," and last, "unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation."

The true key-note of Advent is that, as our Lord went away, so He will come any day, to judge the world.

"It may be in the evening
When the work of the day is done,
And you have time to sit in the twilight
And watch the sinking sun,
While the long bright day dies slowly
Over the sea,
And the hour grows quiet and holy
With thoughts of Me."

Of the many scores of references in the Old and New Testaments to our Lord's second

Advent, a few important ones will suffice as an example. We read in the Epistle of St. Jude, that Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied saying, "The Lord cometh with ten thousand of His saints, to execute judgment upon all;" this deserves to be classed with the early prophecies of the event. In the thirty-third chapter of Deuteronomy, we find this passage: "He came with ten thousands of saints; from His right hand went a fiery law for. them." In Haggai occurs the prophecy to which St. Paul refers in Hebrews xii.: "Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land." In Malachi we read: "Who may abide the day of His coming?" In Zachariah we find a most explicit reference, showing that He will return to the very spot from which He ascended: "And His feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east." And in other verses of the same chapter we read: "And it shall come to pass in that day, that the light shall not be clear, nor dark: But it shall be one day which shall be known to the Lord. . . . And the Lord shall be King over all the earth."

The Psalter is replete with allusions to the Second Coming. "He shall call the heaven from above, and the earth, that He may judge His people." In the Venite we sing: "For He cometh, for He cometh to judge the earth;" in the Cantate Domino, "With righteousness shall He judge the world."

Of the numerous and explicit references in the Gospels and Epistles, as well as in the Revelation, every one is more or less aware. But constant research and study seem to throw new light upon the subject. "It must be read," says a devout writer, "in its profounder teachings, in those wonderful depths of meaning that underlie its illustrations, its metaphors, its history, as well as sparkle up to the sunlight in its bright prophetic announcement of coming glory."

The Jews studied the prophecies, but they confused those which foretold His coming with glory, by applying them to His first coming; hence they refused to receive Him when He came in humility. All the prophecies of His first Coming, His Birth in Bethlehem, His Death and Resurrection, have been fulfilled. Those relating to His appearing in great glory

remain to be fulfilled. It is easy now for the Church to separate the one from the other. As those which pointed to His First Coming were carried out to the very letter, so we know those referring to His second Advent must be fulfilled in the manner revealed in Scripture. But of that day and hour no man knoweth.

To meditate upon this subject is both practical and devout, and we are commanded to do so by our Lord and His Apostles. Christ says: "Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come." And: "Ye know not when the Master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning."

He uses the belief in His Coming as a reason for fidelity and unworldliness. The Apostles use this hope as an encouragement to mildness and patience, to sincerity and the sanctification of the entire being; to brotherly love and holy conversation: they bid us hold fast the hope and purify ourselves even as He is pure. The two Epistles to the Thessalonians teem with thoughts upon this great truth, which St. Paul, inspired by the Holy Spirit, presents to his readers with earnestness and clearness. There

is not one chapter in the two books that does not refer to it, and after describing how the Lord will come, he says: "Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

The Revelation of St. John is full of references to the subject. The Apostles looked forward with the most intense longing for the coming of our Lord, when they should receive the crown of rejoicing, and they exhorted all to be patient and keep the commandments until His appearing. All the early Christians longed for that day, they felt in banishment without their King. But now very different is the attitude of most Christians. Speaking of how few long for that glorious day, a writer says: "It is generally those who are passing through affliction, or those very near the Lord. Those who are enjoying the well-watered plains of this world seem to care very little about seeing the owner of the estate."

But the Church guards against her children's forgetting this glorious hope by her daily references to it, and her special yearly teachings in Collects, Epistles, and Gospels. In the Collect for the first Sunday in Advent, we pray: "That in the last day, when He shall

come again in His glorious majesty to judge both the quick and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal." On the third Sunday we are taught that as St. John the Baptist was sent to prepare for the first Coming, so the priests of the Church are sent to prepare the way for the second.

We know that the saints in Paradise must look forward with patient but intense longing for that day ; in the words of an English bishop: "Think how they must desire to see Christ no longer humbled and patronized, and His Bride no longer despised, to see Him acknowledged as King of kings and Lord of lords, to see the mightiest conquerors among the sons of men casting down their crowns before the throne."

The world laughs at those who are watching for His appearing, even as St. Peter foretold: " There shall come in the last days scoffers, . . . saying: where is the promise of His coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning."

One by one the events prophesied to take place before that day are being fulfilled; the

Gospel has been offered to almost all nations, the remnant of Israel is year by year returning to Palestine, and in Jerusalem the Jews are numbered by thousands.

"When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh."

"For unto you is given
To watch for the coming of His feet,
Who is the glory of our blessed heaven,
The work and watching will be very sweet.

"Even in an earthly home,
And in such an hour as ye think not,
He will come!"

The Greek word translated coming, *apokolupsis,* does not mean coming as from a distance, but merely the lifting up of the veil which separates the invisible world from our natural vision. To some the veil seems impenetrable, but to others the rays of golden glory are shining through; and as it is constantly lifted for loved ones to enter, visions of the glory which shall be revealed are vouchsafed to the waiting and longing Church. Alas! for that soul which, like Galileo, "cares

for none of those things." To such the second Coming is a genuine *Dies Iræ*, but the children of the Church comfort themselves with the glorious hope of His appearing, when "we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is."

"Thou art coming! We are waiting
With a hope that cannot fail;
Asking not the day or hour,
Resting on Thy word of power,
Anchored safe within the veil.

"Time appointed may be long,
But the vision must be sure,
Certainty shall make us strong,
Joyful patience can endure."

CHAPTER II.

THE NATIVITY

"O little town of Bethlehem!
How still we see thee lie;
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep
The silent stars go by.
Yet in thy dark streets shineth
The everlasting Light;
The hopes and fears of all the years
Are met in thee to-night."

THERE is an inexpressible tenderness and pathos in the fact, that while the highest and most powerful classes of the worldly wise were unconscious of the glory that overshadowed them, the King of kings came to earth in the guise of a little child, to save and redeem those very ones who had forgotten the promise of His coming. In imperial Rome the thousands of spectators who flocked to the amphitheatre, and the senators who were offering divine honors to their cruel emperor, were desirous of no Messiah, neither did they await

His advent. In cultured Greece, the wise philosophers knew not that He who would teach the true philosophy was about to come to earth; while in Jerusalem, the proud Pharisee and the learned Scribe, fulfilling the letter of the law but neglecting the spirit, were longing for a Messiah who would come with a retinue and pomp which would surpass any that earth's proudest monarch had possessed. But here and there, in both heathen and Jewish lands, some simple and holy souls were gazing heavenward with an earnest hope of better things to come.

Christus natus est! But what depths of humility! Not in palace of the Cæsars, not in sculptured dwellings of the Greeks, must we look for the Christ, but in the rude stable, in a manger. "Where the beasts at morn will champ their bean-straw" lay the Holy Babe, waited upon by the adoring Virgin Mother and the devout Joseph. But the glory of the invisible world centred in that humble cave. Angels and archangels knelt in awe, for the Almighty had said, when He brought His First Begotten into the world: "And let all the angels of God worship Him!"

Strange and mysterious was the Divine selection, that out of all the myriad worlds, God chose our little one for such scenes of transcendent import; and of all the cities of our earth, chose the little town of Bethlehem, nestled among the hills of Palestine, as the birthplace of the Saviour of mankind.

> "So many hills arising, green and gray,
> On earth's large round,
> And that one hill to say:
> 'I was His bearing place.'"

In the study of God's dealings with the world, with a nation, or with an individual, we find mysterious connecting links. Bethlehem, the house of bread, had a history long before the culminating event of our Lord's birth made it forever memorable in the annals of the world. Here, within a mile at least, Benjamin was born, as Jacob was returning with his family, flocks, and herds, to his native land; here Ruth became the wife of Boaz and ancestress of our Lord; here David, a type in many ways of the true Anointed, was also born; and it was King David who gave to Chimham, the son of the hospitable Barzillai,

as a possession forever, his own ancestral home in which Ruth and Boaz had lived. More than four hundred years after, this same house, called the house of Chimham, and now become the khan, or public inn, was the refuge of Jeremiah in the days of heathen persecution.

Thus link joins link, until the types which foretold the great event had passed away, and then two weary travellers sought at this same khan a night's lodging. But there was no room for them in the inn, so in the adjoining stable, a part, really, of the establishment, they found a humble resting-place. Mary, the holy and uncomplaining Maid of Nazareth, tired with her long and tedious journey, had no earthly companion save Joseph, her divinely appointed guardian. But surely she, blessed above all other women, was conscious of the presence of the heavenly attendants who filled the rude shelter.

The Nativity is presented to us in a twofold aspect, the heavenward and the earthward. Looking at it in its heavenly aspect we see the Only Begotten of the Father, Who from all eternity reigned co-equally with the Father and the Holy Spirit, leaving His glory, resign-

ing His throne, and veiling His Divinity by taking to Himself our flesh, and becoming for us a little child. Truly, the angels must have desired to look into such a mystery of divine love, and it was fitting that they should appear visibly on earth to announce the joyful tidings that the Saviour, Christ the Lord, was born.

"What sudden blaze of song
Spreads o'er the expanse of heaven?
In waves of light it thrills along,
The angelic signal given.
'Glory to God! on high, on earth be peace,
And love towards men of love, salvation and release.'"

Then take the Nativity on its earthly side. Though the kings of the world heeded not His coming, a few humble shepherds, tending their flocks by night, thought and talked of the promised Messiah. To these men, lowly and humble of heart, following the occupation of David who tended his father's sheep, the celestial vision was vouchsafed. They only, with the three Wise Men, seers from the ever-thoughtful Orient, were prepared for the "glad tidings of great joy." The shepherds, types of humility, and the sages, types of that

heavenly wisdom which is first pure and then peaceable, alone were chosen.

"So many simple shepherds keeping flocks,
In many moonlit fields! but only they,
So lone, so long ago, so far away,
On that one winter's night, at Bethlehem,
To have white angels singing lauds for them."

There is an indescribable something, very near to heaven, that surrounds every little babe; how infinitely more did it irradiate the Christ-Child. And He, the Holiest, sleeps, apparently unconscious of that life of suffering into which He had entered:

"Sleep, my Saviour, sleep,
Sweet on Mary's breast;
Now the shepherds kneel adoring,
Now the Mother's heart is joyous,
Take a happy rest.

"Sleep, my Saviour, sleep,
Sweet on Mary's breast;
Crucified, with wound and bruises
Bleeding, purple, stained, disfigured,
One day Thou wilt rest."

For a moment imagine ourselves in the place of the humble shepherds. They have seen not merely one angel, but a multitude of

the heavenly host, singing and praising God. And now to them, as so often to the devout and lowly, a sign is given to confirm the vision: "Ye shall find the Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes lying in a manger." Would we not have hasted, even as they did, to see this glorious sign which the angels had given?

"Therewith hasted they
By olive-yards, and old walls mossed and gray,
Where in close chinks, the lizard and the snake,
Thinking the sunlight come, stirred half awake;
Across the terraced levels of the vines,
Under the pillared palms, along the lines
Of lance-leaved oleanders, scented sweet,
Through the pomegranate-gardens sped their feet;
Past David's well, past the town-wall they ran,
Unto the house of Chimham, to the Khan."

Who in all the wide world, save the Holy Family, and the three Wise Men, who, even now, were travelling from the land of the rising sun, would have believed the story of the simple shepherds' vision? The haughty Pharisee, and the learned Rabbi, the cultured Greek, and the voluptuous Roman, would they have given credence to a tale of the supernatural? Ah, no! even as to-day the world

would have laughed at their faith. Dreams, superstitions, overwrought imaginations, these are the terms by which the shepherds' vision of angels would be designated by the sceptical and heartless multitude.

Outwardly, the world remained the same, buying and selling, tyrannizing and oppressing, not recognizing the fact that the Son of God had come to dwell amongst them, bringing to all a message of peace.

> "Peace on earth and good-will,
> Souls that are gentle and still,
> Hear the first music of this
> Far-off, infinite bliss."

The great lesson for us to learn from the Nativity of our Lord, is humility. What insults, what degradation, what slights can the world offer to us compared with those our Saviour endured from the time He left His heavenly home to be born in a rude stable, until, after thirty years of lowly and patient toil, and three years of teaching and ministering to an ungrateful world, He pillowed His dying, thorn-crowned head upon the hard wood of the cross, and so consummated the Great Sacrifice of His mysterious earth-life.

CHAPTER III.

THE EPIPHANY

"Witness them entering, these three from afar,
Who knew the skies, and had the strange white star
To light their nightly lamp, thro' deserts wide
Of Bactria, and the Persic wastes, and tide
Of Tigris and Euphrates, past the snow
Of Ararat, and where the sand winds blow
O'er Ituraea; and the crimson peaks
Of Moab, and the fierce, bright, barren reeks
From Asphaltitris; to this hill—to thee
Bethlehem-Ephrata!"

To us, who are "the dwellers in the uttermost parts of the earth," the Gentiles, who were not included in the Covenant which the Great Jehovah made with His chosen Israelites, the festival of the Epiphany comes with transcendent import; for in the adoration of the Orient sages, we behold the first-fruits of the Gentile Church. As one of our bishops says: "There seems a great propriety that we should keep the feast with a willing and a holy

worship; presenting ourselves before God on its recurrence as living witnesses that those who sat in darkness have seen a great light."

This day, so wonderful in its supernatural and practical teachings, is known by different names. With us, Twelfth Night, and the Epiphany, signifying in the Greek, "the Manifestation," are the usual appellations. In the German language the day is called *Dreykönigstag*, and in the French, *Les Rois*, while in the old Moz-arabic ritual it is called *Apparitio Domini*, and in the Spanish *Apparicon.*

One of the most natural questions to ask is, who were these wise men, who travelled from the distant East to worship the Christ-Child, and is there any information concerning them that may be gleaned from the Bible or from tradition? In the Old Testament prophecies there are many references to the visit of the Magi, which reveal their rank and nationality. In that grand psalm of prayer for Solomon, lifting up his eyes, David beheld the scroll of the future unrolled, and declared: "The Kings of Tharsis and of the isles shall give presents; the kings of Arabia and Saba shall

bring gifts." In one of the lessons for the day, perhaps the most glorious among the prophecies of Isaiah, we find many allusions to the wise men. "And the Gentiles shall come to Thy light, and kings to the brightness of Thy rising. . . . The multitudes of camels shall cover Thee, the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah; all they from Sheba shall come; they shall bring gold and incense, and they shall show forth the praises of the Lord." And again: "Surely the isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring Thy sons from far, their silver and their gold with them, unto the name of the Lord Thy God."

St. Matthew, alone of the four gospellers, gives an account of the story, in which he describes them merely as "wise men from the East."

Of traditional teaching concerning the Magi we have much that is interesting. They were men of high rank, for the prophecies speak of them as kings, and in the East it was the learned priests and men of high rank who were devoted to the study of astronomy and mystic lore. In early Christian sculpture and

mosaics they are always represented as three in number, and alike in appearance. Later, we find them portrayed in art as types of three great nations. The names given to them are Gaspar, Melchior, and Balthazar; and it is believed that returning to their own country, they spent the remainder of their lives in the service of God, and in due time were baptized by St. Thomas, the Apostle to India.

The thought arises, how did they, not being the children of the Covenant, know that which was revealed to so few in the land of God's chosen people? There can be but one solution of the question; their foreknowledge was supernatural. The Birth of Christ was surrounded from the first by supernatural events, in which the ministry of the angels forms a prominent part. An angel announces the Advent of our Lord to the Blessed Mary; the same information is given to St. Joseph in a dream, and the angels appear to the shepherds; hence we may safely assert that the joyful tidings were revealed by angels or dreams to the three devout sages who waited upon God to learn His will. To them the miraculous star was given as a sign, that star which

Balaam, the son of Beor, foretold should arise out of Jacob. Says a prominent Church historian: "It does not appear, on a study of the whole narrative, that the star went before them as a guide from their abode in the East to Jerusalem."

We see from St. Matthew that after obtaining the information they desired, they left Jerusalem and wended their way toward Bethlehem; then "the star, which they saw in the East, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was." The next verse plainly indicates that on the journey they had been without the visible sign. "When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy." An ancient commentary on St. Matthew says the star had the form of a radiant child bearing a sceptre or a cross. Whatever its form, it was startling and unusual, and thus easily discerned by the wise men, for whose benefit it alone appeared. It must have moved along close to the earth, in order to indicate the very house in which the Holy Family were dwelling. The fact that these kings were of the despised Gentile race, and yet were chosen to be the recipients of

such marvellous supernatural revelations, confirms what St. Peter declared: "In every nation he that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with Him."

Many learned men among the Orientals were thoughtful and devout, striving to ascertain and perform the will of the God Whom they longed to know. The author of "Ben Hur" depicts Gaspar as saying: "I gave myself up to waiting for what every breath was a prayer—for revelation. Believing in God, invisible, yet supreme, I also believed it possible so to yearn for Him, with all my soul, that He would take compassion and give me an answer." God never refuses the gift of Himself to the soul that yearns for Him. "Delight thou in the Lord and He shall give thee thy heart's desire."

Very beautiful is the description of the appearance of these Eastern travellers by one who is conversant with Oriental manners and customs:

"The Indian silk affords, with many a folded
braid of white and gold,
Shade to their brows; rich goat-hair shawls
did fold,

Their gowns of flow'r'd white muslin, midway
tied;
Curled shoes of goat-skin dyed, with seed pearls
hemmed,
Shod their brown feet; hair shorn; lids low, to
think—
Eyes deep and wistful, as of those who drink
Waters of hidden wisdom, night and day,
And live twain lives, conforming as they may,
In diligence, and due observances
To ways of men; yet, not at one with these;
But ever straining past the things that seem
To that which Is—the Truth behind the Dream."

By the teaching of the Holy Spirit they knew the Christ-Child, and when they beheld Him with His ever-blessed Mother, they fell down and worshipped Him; and then having thus offered Him first the gift of themselves, they opened their costly treasures, for they had not come empty-handed to worship Him, and presented Him with a wealth of the rarest treasures, gold, frankincense, and myrrh—symbolic gifts, which the Spirit had directed them to bring.

"Sacred gifts of mystic meaning,
Incense doth the God disclose,
Gold, the King of kings proclaimeth,
Myrrh, His sepulchre foreshows."

Then the sacred narrative tells us that God warned them in a dream (thereby giving us the clew as to the first revelation) not to return to Herod, and, mindful of this heavenly warning, they obeyed. The unscrupulous Herod, enraged at being thwarted in his brutal and sacreligious purposes, issued the infamous edict that all the little ones in Bethlehem and the coasts thereof should be slain.

Did the foolish monarch imagine that he could frustrate the workings of Divine Providence, or readjust the plans and counsels known to the Blessed Trinity from all eternity? Did he believe that there were no holy angels who would guard the Christ-Child from the profaning hands of the soldiers who were bidden to execute his barbarous plans? Truly, it is a vain thing to fight against God! He only added to his own sins and filled to overflowing the cup of his iniquity. True, many little ones were slain, but oh! what infinite compensation in the celestial world atoned to them for the loss of their life here. For now they follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth, and are without fault before the throne of God.

The Holy Family, surrounded by angels, journey in peace and safety to the land of the Egyptians, while:

"The Eastern Three
Wind homewards, lightened of their spice and gold;
And those great days, that were to be, unfold
In the fair fields beside the shining sea
Which rolls, mid palms and rocks, in Galilee."

CHAPTER IV.

THE ANNUNCIATION

"Ave Maria! blessed maid!
Lily of Eden's fragrant shade.
Who can express the love
That nurtured thee so pure and sweet,
Making thy heart a shelter meet
For Jesus' holy Dove?"

—*Keble.*

To all thoughtful and devout Catholics the Annunciation suggests the most profound as well as the most humble meditation. For nearly a score of centuries, poets, artists, and theologians have delighted to portray that scene which was of such stupendous consequence to our fallen humanity, the Incarnation of the Son of God.

With reverence we may think of that pure, thoughtful maiden, robed in spotless white, as she knelt at her evening devotions, desiring in her heart of hearts the coming of the Messiah. Ancient prophecy had foretold that He should restore to favor His chosen people. With

folded hands she must have prayed to the great Jehovah that the Desire of all nations might come to a sin-laden people to release them from their bonds; that the Star of Jacob might arise; that the Prince might be born, and that the promise made to Eve might be fulfilled!

But not to herself did she dream that this honor was to be vouchsafed! She prayed not that she might become the mother of the Messiah. Hers was a humility too deep to have imagined herself worthy of such an honor, but she prayed only that the time of the great Advent might speedily come.

All Jewish matrons longed for the honor of becoming the mother of the promised Messiah, but to none of them, wealthy, gifted, and religious, came the celestial Messenger; it came only to a simple and devout village maid, of the little town of Nazareth.

Even as now the still, small voice speaks not to the devotee of fashion, nor to the gay worldling, nor to the proud and ambitious leader, but to the humble and pure, who seek not publicity and notoriety, but strive to do the will of God with a gentle and unobtrusive spirit, wherever it hath pleased Him to call them.

As Mary communed with her Maker, a heavenly light filled the apartment, and the great angel of the Presence chamber, he who said to Zacharias, "I am Gabriel that stand in the presence of God," appeared to the humble maid with the angelic salutation: "Hail! thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: Blessed art thou among women!"

It was not the appearance of the angel that troubled her. St. Luke says, "She was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be." It may not have been her first glimpse of a celestial visitor. The pure in heart are sometimes vouchsafed communion with the heavenly inhabitants; Abraham, Manoah, Jacob, Elijah, Elisha, Daniel, Zacharias, and others were, even in the old dispensation, permitted to see angels. In the words of an eminent writer of our day: "Angels have power to make themselves visible or to remain invisible to men; men may see or not see angels, according to their own mental or spiritual state."

Very tenderly the heavenly visitor reassures her, telling her not to fear his saying, for she has found favor with God. Her prayer is an-

swered; the Christ is coming, but, wonder of wonders, He is coming to that pure, humble maiden! Ah, what faith, what humility, what prompt, implicit obedience is hers, as Gabriel explains to her the honor that has been bestowed upon her!

It was not a sudden spirit of obedience, it was the habit of her life, young as she was, that prompted her to say, with lowly submission: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord. Be it unto me according to thy word!"

The heavenly radiance fades from her vision, but with angels, and archangels, and all the company of heaven, she is worshipping the Triune God; the Word is made flesh, and God has tabernacled with mankind!

"And her soul was filled with a sacred light,
And she knew that to her was given
A crown eternal, surpassing all
The glories of earth and heaven."

And now the glory of heavenly life that Eve lost for her race, is again vouchsafed to us by the faith of the Blessed Virgin, the mother of our Redeemer, of Him who has opened the gates of Paradise to all believers! The Day

Star has indeed risen above the horizon, the night is far spent, and dawn of a day that knows no ending is at hand. All generations shall call her, Mary of Galilee, blessed above all women.

"Upon the virgin's brow
Sits innocence enthroned,
And motherhood's sweet presence now
Its lighter lines have toned.
Thou hast no jasper palace trod, nor unveiled glories seen,
Yet o'er thee rests the aureole of heaven's untinted sheen."

CHAPTER V.

THE VISITATION

"Hail! fair Madonna, hail!
O'er all thy sisterhood,
Transcendent image of the True,
The Beautiful, the Good,
All generations shall rise up, and welcome thee, the blest,
As in the holy calendar that heralds thy high feast."

It seems to be a characteristic of the record of God's dealing with men, that signs, as a confirmation of faith, are seldom vouchsafed to the doubting, the incredulous, or to those who, like the chief priests and scribes, demand a sign, in scorn or derision of sacred persons and things. The Blessed Virgin did not doubt God's message to her, but to strengthen her sincere faith, the angel gave her a sign.

It was in the early spring that the holy Maid started with all haste, up through that lovely

fertile country to a city of Judea, situated among the beautiful Judean hills, there to confer with her aged cousin Elizabeth, the wife of Zacharias, upon the joyful events which the future had in store for them. The birds must have carolled more joyfully at her coming, and the early flowers put forth their most beauteous blossoms, as they heard the approaching footsteps of the Bride of heaven. The meeting of the two relatives, one so aged, and the other so young and fair, is graphically described by St. Luke. Elizabeth is filled with the Holy Ghost and in her humility cries: "Whence is this to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me!" prefacing her remark with the exclamation: "Blessed art thou among women!" Then, unable longer to conceal the rapturous joy with which her pure, devout heart was overflowing, Mary breaks forth into those inspired strains of praise, which are the priceless heritage of the Catholic Church.

"My soul doth magnify the Lord,
And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour."

This hymn is the first intimation that we have of the Holy Maid's apprehension of the

great things which she had seen and heard. It deserves the most careful and devotional study. In comparing it with the ninety-eighth Psalm we find a similarity of thought.

"O sing unto the Lord a new song, for He hath done marvellous things
With His own right hand, and with His holy arm, hath He gotten Himself the victory."

In the *Magnificat*, Mary says: "He hath showed strength with His arm, He hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts." In the fourth verse of the Psalm, David says: "He hath remembered His mercy and truth toward the house of Israel; and all the ends of the world have seen the salvation of our God." While the Blessed Virgin says, "He remembering His mercy hath holpen His servant Israel."

The Psalms and prophecies must have been very familiar to one of St. Mary's devout habits of thought, and further proof of this may be found in comparing her song with that of Hannah, the joyful mother of Samuel. In her thanksgiving, after having dedicated her little son to the service of the temple, we no-

tice some similar thoughts, as in the following quotations, some of which are abbreviated:

"My heart rejoiceth in the Lord, mine horn is exalted in the Lord, because I rejoice in thy salvation.

* * * * * * * *

The Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich; He bringeth low and lifteth up:

He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, to make them inherit the throne of glory. . . . He will keep the feet of His saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness, for by strength shall no man prevail."

Then Hannah breaks forth into an inspired prophecy of the judgment and the exaltation of the Christ:

"Out of heaven shall He thunder upon them; the Lord shall judge the ends of the earth, and He shall give strength unto His King, and shall exalt the horn of His anointed!"

And as Hannah gave her son to the Lord, so holy Mary, although knowing that a sword should pierce through her own soul, yet hindered not her Son and Saviour from entering upon His work, willingly bearing such sorrow and anguish as no other woman ever experienced.

The Gospel says that Mary abode about

three months with Elizabeth. Oh! how elevated must have been the unrecorded intercourse of these three months. What a feast of spiritual things! What an interchange of religious thought, and what a study and searching of the prophecies which foretold the coming of the Messiah, and of Elias, His forerunner.

There is a beautiful legend connected with St. Mary after her return to Nazareth. It is said that a certain stream where the maiden came and dipped the linen garments she was making, became possessed of miraculous powers. The story is beautifully told in a poem from which a few verses may be quoted:

"By Nazareth, in waters fair,
The Virgin dipped the robes of white;
A woman washed beside her there
Her linen, in the rosy light."

The woman tells St. Mary of the wonderful healing power the waters now possess, and says:

"Have angels stirred the mystic pool?
The Virgin whispered: 'Praise the Lord.'
And Mary smiled with secret thrill,
Not yet the time! And dreamed her dream,
Sweet soul, and still she came, and still,
She dipped small garments in the stream."

Fondly the imagination lingers around the Holy Maid who knew the secrets of heaven, and "pondered them in her heart;" and many are the lessons we may draw for ourselves from these sacred and historic events.

Again, an angel from heaven appears in Nazareth, but this time to the aged Joseph, and appoints him the guardian of the mother and her Holy Child, that Child who, the messenger announces, shall save His people from their sins.

There is one thing that we do well to meditate upon, and that is the supreme blessedness of Mary. In the angel Gabriel's message to her, he says: "Blessed art thou among women." And Elizabeth, speaking by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, says: "Blessed art thou among women;" and also, "Blessed is she that hath believed, for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord." And again, Mary, who was full of grace, says of herself, "All generations shall call me blessed."

What other woman so fitted to be the model for the women of our day, as the Mother of our Lord? She, who shows the calm spirit of recol-

lection and humble obedience, wherever we meet with her in the sacred record. At the Annunciation, the Visitation, the Presentation, throughout our Lord's earthly life, and even standing at the Cross, "her watchful station keeping."

"O thou, august o'er all sweet womanhood,
Thou ever blest and ever holy one,
Gazing, tear-dimmed, upon thy bleeding Son."

Ah! how different from many mothers of the nineteenth century.

"Do they help as the Blessed Virgin did,
Will they yield to our Father's will,
Will they give up all
To the Master's call,
And love and serve Him still?

"Oh, mothers! live as Saint Mary lived,
To magnify the Lord
If strong to bear,
You may surely share
The exceeding great reward."

CHAPTER VI.

LENT

"Hear thy servant's meditations,
Lord of Light and Love Divine,
Hear our sad soul's supplications,
And incline our wills to Thine!
May this time of prayer and fasting,
All these hours of holy rest,
Bring us treasures everlasting,
Be to us a season blest."

INTRODUCTION

The devout observance of the Lenten season is a habit that increases with each returning year, and is one which can never pall upon those who hunger and thirst after righteousness. For there are always sins to be overcome, works of corporal and spiritual mercy to be engaged in, and, above all, the withdrawal from the world and its lawful pursuits gives more time and quiet for meditation, that hand-

maid of religion. The contemplation of God and heavenly things is an ever-springing fountain which the ages of eternity cannot exhaust. Says the devout Francis de Sales: "I will contemplate the infinite wisdom, omnipotent, and incomprehensible goodness of God, but I will specially aim at this—how these excellent attributes shine forth in the sacred mysteries of the life of our Lord Jesus Christ."

There is then no subject so suitable for Lenten contemplation as the human side of the life of Christ. He came to earth not only as a sacrifice for our sins; He came also to set us the example of a pure and holy life. There are many ways in which to study the life of the blessed Jesus, but it will suffice for our purpose to look upon it in two aspects. We find that His life was one of work, and yet it was pre-eminently a life of prayer. He worked as a man and He prayed as a man.

I.—WORK

The life of our Lord was one of simplicity. His home was the abode of a carpenter in an obscure mountain village. In this town of Nazareth, held in ill-repute by the inhabitants

of Palestine, He passed thirty years, making Himself one with the poor and lowly, whom He had come to save. Infinite would have been His condescension had He left His Father's house for the highest earthly throne, but how transcendent is His humility when we view Him in His lowly Nazarene home. As has been said: "He set His own feet upon the paths which the poor and neglected must tread. He lived His life in Nazareth that He might pour silent contempt upon the world's pride of place, fortune, and fame; and that His followers might learn to make any post of duty honorable by their own greatness and fidelity."

We can picture to ourselves our Lord as He came to manhood and took upon Himself His foster-father's trade, and supported His gentle and holy mother by the labors of His own hands. He knew weariness, hunger, and thirst like others, but still He toiled on, unknown and secluded, waiting until His Father should give the word which would be the signal for His going forth upon the special mission for which He entered this world. As a man He learned the lesson of silence, patience, and humility while He plied His lowly trade.

"Meek and sweet in the sun He stands,
Drinking the cool of his Syrian skies.
Lifting to Heaven toil-wearied hands,
Seeing His Father with those pure eyes.

"Gazing from trestle and bench and saw
To the kingdom kept for His rule above;
Oh, Jesu, Lord! we see with awe!
Oh, Mary's son, we look with love!"

"I must work the works of Him that sent me," was ever our Lord's motto. Whether it were to labor at the carpenter's bench, or to heal the sick and feed the multitude, He ever held Himself in readiness for each heaven-sent task as it presented itself before Him. The heart kindles with humble and adoring love as it dwells upon the self-sacrificing life of Christ.

"Do I not love Thee? Thou whose patient feet
Pressed Olivet's green slopes, or wearily
Day after day, along the city's street,
Mid toil and heat bore the hard lot of our humanity!"

Finding that our Lord's life was one of work, we must of necessity endeavor to make our own after the pattern revealed to us. We find that He always did the work that His Father set for Him. We, each one of us, are

placed in this world to do some certain work, which no one else can do, and which we are fitted by nature to perform. In the words of Mrs. Charles: "Let us be very careful of thinking, on the one hand, that we have no work assigned us to do, or, on the other, that what we have assigned to us is not the right thing for us." And Ruskin says: "He sets us all in the places where He wishes us to be employed, and that employment is truly our Father's business. He chooses work for every creature which will be delightful to them if they do it simply and humbly. He always gives strength enough and sense enough for what He wants us to do."

If we hold ourselves in readiness to do whatever He appoints, we will never complain if our little plans are frustrated and the time in which we intended to perform great deeds is occupied by the performance of what seems trivial to us. No work appointed by God, and done for Him, is trivial. Instead of the active, useful life we had planned, we may be called aside from the busy world to suffer and to be silent. Yet this is acceptable work to God. "They also serve who only stand and wait."

Carlyle says: "Do not object that your duties are so insignificant; they are to be reckoned of infinite significance, and alone important to you." Years that are spent in obscurity are not lost years. There we may learn the lessons Christ came to teach; and when the lowly tasks are faithfully performed, either here or in the world beyond, other and greater tasks may await us. But until then let us learn the patient waiting taught by those thirty years in Nazareth.

"O silent years that saw the Light of Light
Fulfil Himself, and orb to perfectness
In lonely splendor, ere He rose to bless
The world that waited in its deepening night,
Teach the impatient hearts that burn to right
Earth's wrongs by some great deed's immediate stress,
The heavenly power of simple holiness!
That he who in his Nazareth out of sight
Awaits a high commission from above,
May surely know he serves his fellows when
He draws God earthward by up-reaching love,
Enshrining Him amid the lives of men;
Since they who would redeem the world from sin
By lifting souls, must first have God within."

Work done for God, and because it is our duty, is never degrading. But to work ac-

ceptably to God we must work with Him, with a realizing sense of His presence. In the words of Dr. Pusey: "Not man's manifold labors, but his manifold cares, hinder the presence of God. Outwardly thou mayest be doing the work of thy calling; inwardly, if thou commend thy work to God, thou mayest be with Him in the third heaven!"

In this age there is too much haste in our work, a spirit of unrest; a great lack of self-recollection, which destroys the contemplative life, the proper atmosphere for the growth of the soul. In the words of another, "In whatever you are called upon to do, endeavor to maintain a calm, collected, and prayerful state of mind." Even in Church work, and in our efforts for the conversion of others, there is a tendency to work by ourselves, without asking for the guidance of the Spirit.

As a devout writer has said: "He who is in what may be called a spiritual hurry, or rather who runs without having evidence of being spiritually sent, makes haste to no purpose." In all our work, both secular and religious, we should aim to possess the spirit of restful dependence, without which no work can be per-

fectly done. Bishop Wilkinson says in that most admirable book, "The Communion of Saints"—"How much time you and I have wasted through not working in this restful spirit! We have rushed from place to place, feeling that something must be done, and that we must go and do it, ourselves, that very moment! And afterward we found that if only we had first knelt down and committed it to God, the work would have been far better done." "Commit thy way unto the Lord, . . . and He shall bring it to pass."

There is so much to be done, and so short a time to do it in, and sloth, one of the most insidious of the seven deadly sins, creeps in and often prevents our doing the very special work that God had assigned us. Or we allow the pleasures of the world so to stifle the inward hearing that when our Lord does speak we do not hear, and cannot answer, as Samuel did, "Speak, for thy servant heareth." In the General Confession we, alas! are often guilty of the sin we deplore: "We have left undone those things which we ought to have done." Says a thoughtful writer, "That part of our work which we have left undone may

first be revealed to us at the end of a life filled up, as we had hoped, with useful employments."

All are not called to work for their daily bread, but because they are blessed with wealth, talents, and time for the performance of great deeds, of them "much shall be required." For them there are vast opportunities to carry out great plans for the conversion of the world, for the relief of the needy, for the building of churches and hospitals, and for the amelioration of the hard lot of their poorer brethren in Christ. The command, "Six days shalt thou labor," applies alike to all. Their work only differs in kind, for all members of the body have not the same office; but all must work the works of Him who sent them into this world of sin.

That we may not grow selfish for ourselves or family let our motto be, "*Non ministrari sed ministrare;*" so when our little lives are ended we may say with our Blessed Lord, "I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do;" and with St. Paul, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the Faith." Then when the holy angels

shall bear our redeemed souls through the golden gates into the rest that remaineth for the people of God, we shall hear those words of blessed assurance, "Well done, good and faithful servant, . . . enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

II.—PRAYER

"More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of."

We have seen that our Lord's life was one of work, and we also know that as a man He lived a life of prayer and of communion with the Father and the unseen world. That life of prayer, that life of contemplation, is within the reach of even the humblest Christian who is in sacramental union with his Lord. A life that excludes prayer and religious meditation, no matter how busy and working a life it may be, is a fruitless one. It is like a mill in which all the machinery may be going, wheels and belts in rapid motion, but with no corn to be ground; hence there will be no result. There will be the noise and confusion, and the seem-

ing appearance of work, but the delicate parts of the mechanism only grate uselessly upon each other, and the purpose for which the mill was constructed is not fulfilled.

There is a Russian legend which teaches a powerful lesson to those who place work above prayer, secular engagements before Church privileges and duties. The story tells how the three wise men, on their journey to the Holy Land, stopped to rest at a peasant's door; and there they told their sacred errand, and urged the mother to take her children and go with them to seek the Holy Child, saying:

"'Who knows what blessings may befall
If they but touch His garment's hem?
And only once for them and all
Will Christ be born at Bethlehem.'

"'Alas! I have so much to do,'
The mother answered with a sigh,
'I cannot journey now with you,
But I will follow by and by.'"

The wise men rode away, and all day the children pleaded with their mother to go, saying:

"'And may we touch His pretty head,
And may we kiss His blessed feet?'"

"But women still will bake and brew,
No matter what sweet honors wait;
And petty tasks they still must do,
Though angels tarry at the gate."

As evening drew on, and the little house was in order, she started, but the wise men were out of sight, and the Star was gone.

"Nor ever did her children see
The Holy Babe they might have kissed."

The Gospels furnish us with repeated instances of our Lord's engaging in prayer. It was with reference to His human nature that He felt the need of communion with God. St. Luke speaks of His praying at His Baptism, and then followed the forty days of fasting and prayer in the wilderness. St. Mark tells us that before He started on His missionary journey through Galilee, He rose up a great while before day, and departed to a solitary place and there prayed. Before selecting the twelve apostles we learn that He went to a mountain and continued all night in prayer. A recent writer has said, "To dance all night is deemed an enviable lot, and to work all night on some important task is considered

highly creditable, but what would be thought now of a person who spent a whole night in prayer!" At the time of His glorious transfiguration He went up into the mountain to pray. And it was in answer to that prayer that the veil was lifted, and the apostles were permitted to see what His glory should be when He would come again at the last day. We read that He prayed at the tomb of Lazarus, and to St. Peter He said, "I have prayed for thee."

So entirely was His a life of prayer that the apostles asked Him to teach them to pray. And in answer to that request He gave them that prayer which countless millions daily use, the precious *Pater Noster*. In His own most perfect and wonderful prayer before His Passion we see the depth of Divine love, the strength of purpose, and the sacrifice of self which characterized His earthly life. He prays for each one of us, that is, for His chosen apostles and all who should believe on Him through their means. And then came the prayer of agony in the garden, but it was a prayer of humble submission. When He entered heaven He did not lay aside His habit of

prayer, but even there "He ever liveth to make intercession" for us.

The Bible, from beginning to end, is replete with encouragements and exhortations to prayer. Abraham, Moses, Daniel, Elijah, and David (who prayed seven times a day) are among the cloud of witnesses surrounding us, who testify to the efficacy of prayer. And then the teachings of Christ and His apostles, how they breathe the spirit of prayer in every page! "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, He will give it you." "Pray without ceasing." "Pray for us." "Pray one for another." "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." "In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." But acceptable prayer, either for ourselves or others, must always be with the condition, "Thy will be done." As Bishop Hall says, "Prayer is not to bend God's will to ours, but to lift ours to God, and to call forth those gifts which He is more ready to give than we to ask."

Prayer is truly the life of the soul. Without it the soul must languish and die. It is to

the spirit what light is to the physical sight. Bishop Wilson says: "He who has learnt to pray aright has got the secret of a holy life;" and St. Chrysostom: "Prayer is the haven to the shipwrecked mariner."

There are two kinds of prayer, mental, and vocal or verbal. The first is defined as meditation or communion with God. Verbal prayer consists in presenting our petitions, in our own or others' words, to Almighty God. Though the Church teaches us to pray for ourselves, for our spiritual and temporal wants, yet the example of our Lord and His saints teaches us not to neglect to pray for others. St. Polycarp continued day and night praying in behalf of all mankind, and for the welfare of the Church, and all the saints spent hours on their knees. But surely it was for others and not for themselves alone that they prayed.

"Wherefore let thy voice
Rise like a fountain for me night and day,
For what are men better than sheep or goats,
That nourish a blind life within the brain,
If knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer,
Both for themselves and those who call them friend.
For so the whole round earth is every way
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God!"

Dr. Pusey, that saint of modern times, teaches us that prayer for others is an indispensable duty, saying:

"Intercession should spread through our lives, so as to become part of our being; when we have an interval in our occupations, when we are walking, when we cannot sleep by night, intercession should be the passion of our hearts. Let us cherish the inward life and make prayer more the end of our lives."

The Christian has a power that the world knows not of, for prayer can annihilate the bounds of time, space, and condition. And though sundered by continents, or the grave itself, from those we love, prayer brings us together. When we know and believe this, why do we ever hesitate to act upon it? As Archbishop Trench says:

"We kneel how weak, we rise how full of power,
Why therefore should we do ourselves this wrong,
Or others, that we are not always strong,
That we are ever overborne with care,
That we should ever weak or heartless be,
Anxious or troubled, when with us is prayer,
And joy, and strength, and courage are with Thee?"

We can only learn to pray aright by the aid of the Holy Spirit, for it is He that helpeth our infirmities, and teacheth us what to pray for. "Prayer," says a holy writer, "is eminently the gift of God. Ask then continually from Jesus the power to ask. He offers up for you the poor earth-bound prayer, and joined to His intercession it mounts at once to God. He bears the golden censer, and much incense is there in it, even the prayers of all saints." But we must free ourselves from the worldly snares that entangle us, in order to hold communion with God. "He who would in his hour of prayer feel the presence of God, must taste lightly even of lawful pleasures." And Cardinal Manning says: "We cannot go from strife and angry words to God."

One who lives in habitual communion with God carries about him an atmosphere so pure and holy that it is discerned by those with whom he comes in contact. His life may be one of toil, but he has learned the secret of living the inner life; and the lowliest duties are no hindrance, as many think, to the highest life of contemplation and sanctification. "Blessed are those holy hours," says Dr.

Pusey, "in which the soul retires from the world (as in Lent) to be alone with God. Learn to commune with Him in stillness, and He whom thou hast sought in stillness will be with thee when thou goest abroad."

Mental prayer or meditation, that is, contemplation of God as distinct from the mere offering of petitions, can only be attained to slowly and by degrees, as the Christian makes progress in the knowledge of spiritual things. "For this contemplation we have to train ourselves; not as though we had already attained, or were already perfect. God knows how far from perfection we are! But we are going on with our training, and God will continue the education on the other side of the veil."

In that highest act of prayer and worship, the offering of the Holy Eucharist, we are enabled to contemplate and feed upon our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. We are then in close communion with God, and are more like the faithful departed who can meditate on the Divine attributes without the hindrances of the world, the flesh, and the devil. But we on earth, by frequent and devout communions,

for which careful preparation has been made, may gain the power, little by little, to meditate more perfectly.

Lent is the time appointed in which, being withdrawn from the world, we are to make such spiritual progress that when the precious season is over we may go back to the world, not to live on the same level as before, but upon a higher plane; not to indulge ourselves the more because of the forty days of fasting, but that strengthened by this special season of prayer, we may be less and less conformed to the world and her pursuits, living in it but not of it, doing our work because God has appointed that man shall labor, yet giving ourselves more and more to prayer, so that when the last great day shall dawn, and we shall be called to enter into the eternal Easter-tide, we may be found clothed with the righteousness of Christ, and having been partakers of His Passion, we may be also partakers of His glorious Resurrection.

CHAPTER VII.

HOLY WEEK

"Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto My sorrow."—*Lamentations* i. 12.

"From pain to pain, from woe to woe,
With loving heart and footsteps slow,
To Calvary with Christ we go.
See how His Precious Blood
At every station pours;
Was ever grief like His?
Was ever sin like ours?"

The Lenten shadows deepen, and beneath the light of the Paschal moon, shining full upon us, we enter into the mystery of the Passion of our Blessed Lord. With bowed heads we contemplate the Cross, rising out of the sacred hill of Calvary, and on the Cross we behold, crowned with thorns, the immaculate Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world. "Indeed," says a devout writer, "one scarcely ventures to speak or write much upon

so sacred a subject. Christ's members should strive silently to realize it to themselves, following our Blessed Lord in thought through the scenes of His suffering and death."

Let us then, during this Holy Week, the *Stille Woche*, as the Germans appropriately call it, leave behind us all thoughts of the world, with its trifling vanities, its petty schemes, and false ambitions, and contemplate in awe the closing scenes in our Lord's earth-life, from His triumphal entrance on Palm Sunday into the city that He loved, until, wearied and exhausted, He slowly wended His way along the *Via Sacra*, passed through the gates of the city which had rejected Him, up to the Mount of Calvary.

It was the week of the Passover. Thousands of pilgrims from all parts of Palestine were in and about the city, having come to keep the feast. As the Saviour started from Bethany with His disciples on that memorable Sunday afternoon, multitudes joined Him, eager to see the Nazarene Prophet, whose fame had spread far and wide, and had aroused the anger of the Scribes and Pharisees. As they accompany Him, strewing their palm-branches,

and spreading even their garments in His way, they cry: "Hosanna to the Son of David; blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest!"

This was an earthly triumph; but how it pales before His triumphal entrance, 'mid choirs of cherubim and seraphim, angels and archangels, into the highest heavens, even to the right hand of God.

Yet what to our Lord is this admiration of a fickle populace! Though to-day they may cry "Hosanna!" ere four days have elapsed the voice of the people will be "Crucify Him, crucify Him!"

As the procession rounded the southern ridge of Mount Olivet, the beautiful city of Jerusalem and the magnificent temple with its golden pinnacles and domes lay spread out before Him. "And when He was come near, He beheld the city and wept over it." He foresaw His rejection, His crucifixion, and the doom of the fair city.

"If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong to thy peace, but now they are hid from thine eyes." Not only for Jerusalem did Christ weep; He

looked far adown the ages, and foresaw who, even to-day, should accept and who reject Him.

On the two days following He again went into the city and taught the people, parrying the attack of those who would entangle Him in His talk, and answering so perfectly that from that time they asked no more questions.

As He began His ministry by the eight Beatitudes, so He closed it by pronouncing the eight woes upon the Scribes, Pharisees, and hypocrites, ending them by that bitter, yearning cry for the dear city of Jerusalem, which He had loved since His first boyhood visit to the temple. Ah! the pathos of that final appeal: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wing, and ye would not!"

That evening, Tuesday, He left the city on His way to Bethany for the last time, and lingered long with His disciples upon the Mount of Olives, discoursing concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, and the end of the world.

A careful study of the Gospel narrative teaches us that the days following were spent in quiet and retirement to prepare for the last great conflict with the powers of evil. Wednesday is memorable as being the day in which Judas covenanted to betray his Master for thirty pieces of silver! The afternoon of the next day the Saviour takes leave of the dear ones at Bethany, and with His chosen Twelve proceeds to the upper room in Jerusalem, where He desired to keep the Passover.

What transcendent love and humility characterized Him when He bathed the feet of His disciples, fed them with His own Body and Blood, and then instituted for His Church that Heavenly Feast, of which the sacrificial Passover was but a type!

But again the darkness overshadows His Spirit, as a few days previous, when in the temple He had cried: "Father, save me from this hour." St. John says: "He was troubled in spirit, and testified, and said, verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me." After singing the closing Psalms of the *Hallel*, "Bind the sacrifice with cords, yea, even unto the horns of the altar," they went

out into the night. Then followed that incomparable discourse, and the great Eucharistic prayer, preserved for the Church by St. John; and after that comes the mysterious agony in the Garden of Gethsemane. Angels with bowed and veiled faces, scarce presumed to look upon such sorrow, when, lonely, as no human being ever knew loneliness, bowed by the weight of our sins, with no earthly sympathy, separated from His beloved Mother, He wrestled alone in such bitterness as none can ever dream of or imagine. "And being in agony He prayed more earnestly; and His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." How He craved sympathy in that dark hour! He had said to Peter, James, and John: "My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death; tarry ye here and watch with Me." And they slept when they might have watched with the Son of God. But an angel from heaven appeared to strengthen Him. What a glorious mission was that, which was fulfilled by the angel of Gethsemane!

"Called to convey, thou blest unnamed one,
The Father's message to the suffering Son!"

It is midnight, and our Lord is betrayed into the hands of sinners, and betrayed by a mark of affection from one of His chosen disciples. Strengthened by prayer, the Blessed Jesu goes majestically forth to suffer and to die. Like a common criminal, He is hurried from Annas to Caiaphas, to Pilate, to Herod, and back to Pilate. He is reviled, He is mocked, He is scourged, He is crowned with thorns, He is condemned to death!

"He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth." "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed."

"They bound Thy temples with the twisted thorn,
Thy bruised feet went languid on with pain,
Thy blood, from all Thy flesh with scourges torn,

Deepened Thy robe of mockery's crimson grain;
Whose native vesture bright,
Was the unapproach-ed light;
The sandal of Whose foot the rapid hurricane."

Oh, what a price it cost to redeem our souls! So speedy, so hasty is the trial that by the third hour the sun shines down upon the crucified Son of God. Picture the awful scene; the ruthless soldiers and the jeering multitude; the agonizing grief of the Mother's heart as she stands and gazes upon her only Son; the terrified disciples, and the faithful women, all standing beneath the Cross whereon the Saviour hangs, between two transgressors of the law. "And He was numbered with the transgressors."

> "Before the Cross, whose cruel wood
> Upbears the dying Son of God,
> To-day my only thought shall be:
> He died thereon for love of me!"

The hours wear away, and from time to time a few words have fallen from those parched and suffering lips. Are they words of condemnation for those who crucified Him? Are they entreaties to be taken down from the Cross? Hark! He who created the millions of rolling worlds, He who could summon myriads of angels to His relief, speaks: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

"To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise." "Woman, behold thy Son; — behold thy Mother." "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me." "I thirst." "It is finished." "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit."

Can we wonder that the centurion cried: "Truly this was the Son of God," and that the people beat their breasts and returned amazed to their homes, after witnessing these scenes. Even Nature uttered her protest in darkness and earthquake.

"Lord of my heart, by Thy last cry,
Let not Thy blood on earth be spent!
Lo, at Thy feet I fainting lie,
Mine eyes upon Thy wounds are bent,
Upon Thy streaming wounds my weary eyes
Wait like the parched earth on April skies.

"O call Thy wanderer home;
To that dear home, safe in Thy wounded side,
Where only broken hearts their sin and shame
may hide."

Yea, truly it was finished; and He, our representative, not merely our substitute, has indeed borne the penalty of the sins of the world, and mankind is redeemed! The climax of our

Lord's humiliation is now attained; there remains no more that jealous Sanhedrims can do; and the poor suffering body is at rest.

> "Ah, never since tears rolled—since human hearts
> Beat quick with hope, to break in blank despair,
> Lay love so wingless, faith so quite forlorn,
> As that dread day, on guilty Golgotha."

All seems inexplicable defeat, but in reality all is eternal victory. The angels guard the sleeping body while the triumphant soul of the Blessed Jesus passes into the realms of departed spirits, and preaches liberty, light, and salvation to those awaiting His entrance.

Glorious, indeed, is the revelation of Divine love displayed on the Cross of Christ. The darkness of eternal death no longer enshrouds our guilty race, but mercy, life, and peace shine over our pathway; and through the Cross we find an abundant entrance into that kingdom of love and joy which is now open to all believers.

CHAPTER VIII.

EASTER-TIDE

"Christ is risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept."—1 *Corinthians* xv. 20.

INTRODUCTION

"The Resurrection of our Lord," says the Rev. Vernon Staley, "is better attested than any fact in history." And this is not the rash statement of an enthusiast. The sceptic accepts, with little or no proof, any fact in ancient or modern history; yet, although the proofs of the Resurrection are overwhelming, he doubts and cavils, and suggests theories of phantoms, or spiritual resurrections, or the wild illusions of the overwrought imaginations of the disciples. Our Lord's own prophecies, the witness of more than five hundred persons, and the permanency of the Church itself, that pillar and ground of the truth, are all assur-

ances of the fact, that on the first glorious Easter Christ rose triumphant from among the dead, bearing in His pierced hands the keys of hell and of death.

The thoughts that come to us during this blessed Easter-tide are twofold: the Resurrection of our Lord, hence, as a necessary sequence, the resurrection of those who are members of His sacred body.

I.

THE RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD.

"Shout aloud the wondrous story,
For the King in all His glory
Draweth nigh this day!
Vernal benediction giving,
Christ the Life—the Ever-living
On this Easter Day!
Let the banners float before us,
Send along the angel chorus—
Christ is risen! He is risen!
This is Easter Day."

The Lenten shadows which culminated in the darkness of Good Friday, are fled away, and the rising of the Sun of Righteousness gilds with roseate hues the cloudless sky of

Easter morning. Marvellous as was the wondrous joy of Christmas-tide, yet compared with the glorious light of the Resurrection, it is as the early dawn to the full noon-tide splendor of the orb of day. The greatest event in the history of the world is the Resurrection of our Blessed Lord.

Thousands of years had rolled away since the first child of man lay dead, slain by his elder brother's hand. Since that time myriad generations had died, and their lifeless forms had been returned to mother earth; but their souls, where are they? Man yearned to know that he was immortal; but how was he to prove it? Some few philosophers seemed to grasp the truth, but their reasoning was not accessible to the many. The Jews were taught it by their Scriptures; yet to the countless multitudes that inhabited our world, death was a terror which showed no bright side to its victims, and none could escape it. Ah! how dark was the cruel grave until that sad but blessed day, when loving hands laid the lifeless form of the Crucified to rest in the silent tomb. But now, to the faithful, death is but the joyful entrance into the Paradise of God.

"O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" Can we wonder that the burden of the Apostles' preaching was "Jesus and the Resurrection?" Let us picture to ourselves the sorrow of the stricken disciples, after the sad burial rites were over, and they realized that He, whom they had acknowledged to be the Son of God, had been taken by cruel hands and slain. Imagine the sorrow of the gentle St. John, the anguish of the apostate St. Peter, and the grief of the faithful women. That first Easter Even, to us now so blessed a day, binding us, like All Saints' Day, with our dear departed, what was the anguish of that day to them! And yet, at this far distant time, we wonder that their faith was so dim, that our Lord's constant reiteration of the statement that He should rise again on the third day, should have made so little impression upon them. The Gospel does not tell us, yet we know that she who from the first "kept all these things and pondered them in her heart," must have been full of faith and hope even while bowed in sorrow. His spiritual Presence must have been with her, even though His body lay resting in the tomb.

Familiar, yet always new and replete with interest, is the story of the Resurrection. Very early, as it began to dawn, when the Sabbath was past, the loving women, Mary Magdalene, Mary, the mother of James, and Salome came with additional spices to embalm the body of their dear Master. But lo! the stone had been rolled away by an angel, and the tomb was empty. While Magdalene hastened to inform the Apostles that the sacred body had been removed, a vision of angels appeared to the women, saying: "Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth which was crucified; He is risen; He is not here: behold the place where they laid Him." Fearing and trembling they hastened to communicate the joyful tidings; then, probably after the visit of St. Peter and St. John to the sepulchre, the loving Magdalene returns to the place and stands outside weeping. She stoops down, and looks into the empty tomb, "and seeth two angels in white, sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain." How sympathetically they speak to her: "Woman, why weepest thou?" and her overburdened heart cries out: "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I

know not where they have laid Him." Then turning, she stands, albeit she knew it not, face to face with Him who had burst the bonds of death, and "brought life and immortality to light." The first recorded word of the risen Lord was her name!

"Oh! A dear word
Spoke first to me, and after me to all,
That all may always know He is the Lord,
And death is dead, and new times come for man;
And heaven's ways justified, and Christ alive,
Whom we saw die, nailed on the cruel cross!
For while I lay there, sobbing at His feet,
The word He spoke, My Lord, my King, my Christ!
Was my name, 'Mary.'"

Yes, Christ had arisen, early on the morning of the third day, even as He had said; and the prophecy of David: "Neither shalt Thou suffer Thy Holy One to see corruption," was fulfilled. Vain was the guard of soldiers, useless the seal which held the great stone. He had power to lay down His life, and He had power to take it again. He needed not that any should roll away the stone that closed the entrance to the tomb, for naught material could now bar the progress of that risen Body.

"So left the glorious Body the rock it slumbered on,
And spirit-like, in silence passed, nor touched the sealed stone.
The angel came full early, but Christ had gone before,
Not for Himself, but for His saints is burst the prison door."

This wonderful, glorious Resurrection thrilled the world from pole to pole, and through the myriads of rolling orbs the angelic choirs hymn the joyful strain: "He is risen, He is risen!"

"He who slumbered in the grave
Is exalted now to save;
Now through Christendom it rings,
That the Lamb is King of kings.
Alleluia!"

Very beautifully does the sainted Keble refer to the belief that He had already been with the holy Mary, His beloved mother.

"And even as from His manger-bed He gave her His first smile,
So now, while seraphs wait, He talks apart with her awhile."

After the interview with Magdalene He appears to the women, saying to them: "All

hail!" then to the loving but recreant Peter, after that to the two as they walked to Emmaus, and finally, in the evening, to the Apostles, assembled with closed doors for fear of the Jews.

We love to dwell on each of the appearances of this first Easter, and very thrilling is the thought of our Blessed Lord joining Cleophas and his companion, drawing them out to speak of their feelings, and then expounding to them all the Scriptures concerning Himself. Oh, what a sermon that must have been! No wonder their hearts burned within them as He spoke. "But their eyes were holden," and they did not know Him. Yet when He took bread and broke it, and gave it to them, they knew Him, and He vanished from their sight. So even now, to the humble soul kneeling before the altar, is vouchsafed a realizing sense of His Presence in the breaking of bread.

> "Be known to us in breaking bread,
> But do not then depart;
> Saviour, abide with us, and spread
> Thy table in our heart."

It was no time to rest; back to Jerusalem they hastened, eager to tell the others the

glorious news, and are met by the glad tidings: "The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon." Then suddenly, the Lord Himself stood in their midst, saying: "Peace be unto you." "Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord." What must have been the rapture of that moment! The defeat they mourned was no defeat; it was eternal victory and endless triumph. But alas! for St. Thomas, he was absent, and, like many another since his day, he missed the blessing of Easter. Yet, for "all things work together for good," the fact that his doubts were solved, when eight days after he beheld his Lord, gave weighty and additional testimony to the fact of the Resurrection.

For forty days our Blessed Lord remained on the earth before His Ascension, appearing at different times, and under different conditions, so that at times He was not immediately recognized. There are ten recorded instances of His appearances, and doubtless there were many more that are not mentioned. St. Luke says He showed Himself alive to the Apostles, whom He had chosen, "By many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days,

and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God." (Acts i. 3.)

Before our Lord entered upon His ministry He fasted forty days, as a means whereby He might be prepared for the work which He had come into the world to perform. Thus it may be, that still being Man as well as God, He set apart forty days of strange mysterious preparation, in this, His newly risen life, before entering into heaven itself, into the glory which He had with His Father before the world was.

But the season of the great forty days drew to a close, and again our Lord meets His dear ones and leads them out of Jerusalem, by the old familiar paths up the verdant slope to the summit of Mount Olivet. They with their understanding not yet illumined by the Holy Spirit, could not have foreseen that He was about to leave them, until having raised His pierced hands in blessing, He ascended in silent majesty amid choirs of angels, when a cloud received Him out of their sight. And now, at the right hand of God, He waits to welcome us home, ever living to make intercession for us. Christ is risen! Alleluia!

II.

THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD

" Oh, how glorious and resplendent,
Fragile body, shalt thou be,
When endued with so much beauty,
Full of health, and strong, and free,
Full of vigor, full of pleasure,
That shall last eternally! "

The fact of the Resurrection of our Blessed Lord is a pledge that those who are members of His sacred Body shall be raised in glory at the last day. In the Creed we say: " I look for the Resurrection of the dead, and the Life of the world to come." " This," says a learned writer, " is the crucial point of the Christian's hope. It is the distinguishing tenet of Christianity, as compared with other religions, that it extends this hope, and makes it an article of faith." Many religions, so-called, have taught in a way the continuance of existence, but none have given to their votaries the comforting belief that the body may also rest in hope. The heathen decorated the tombs of their departed with symbols of despair; we place on the grave

a cross, the emblem of our faith, and plant sweet flowers, which, blooming with each returning spring, are symbolic of the resurrection of the sleeping form beneath.

"If a man die shall he live again?" has been the cry of suffering humanity for thousands of years. "Man's heart and flesh cry out for the living God; they claim the Resurrection; they ask to see life—the whole of life—bloom, as a flower, according to the fancy of the old alchemists, might be raised from its ashes."

Where and how are we really taught that the body shall rise again? Reasoning from analogy, though it may strengthen and confirm a belief, is of course not an absolute proof. Yet a thoughtful study of nature, that unspoken word of the Lord, reveals a resurrection in all her works. What is sleep but the twin brother of death! Outwardly we die each night, and rise to life again in the morning. The seed, that simile so aptly used by St. Paul, which contains the germ of the future plant, must be buried and die, in order to bring forth the new life. The insignificant worm dies to the light, yet from out its tomb it bursts forth a radiant and winged creature.

"Lo, on the turf, the empty cocoon lay!
But from its gloom, up towards the perfect light,
Had soared on wings with gold and crimson
wrought,
The once dull life that trod earth's dusty way."

Again, nature wrapped in her snowy shroud, through the long, dreary winter, springs into full life under the genial rays of the vernal sun.

" Countless types of resurrection
We may see in every sod;
Germ and grass blade in perfection
Rise in perfect proof of God,
And that life from death shall be evermore a
verity."

But we need not depend on nature when we have spoken revelations as a guide. The direct assertions in regard to the resurrection of the body in the Old Testament are not numerous, but our Lord Himself uses in His argument with the Sadducees the following: " And as touching the dead that they rise; have ye not read in the book of Moses, how in the bush God spake unto him, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living; ye therefore do greatly err." In another place we read of "one like the simil-

itude of the sons of men," saying to Daniel: "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." And David in the Psalter for the ninth day, speaking of the dead, declares that "the righteous shall have dominion over them in the morning." But the most triumphant assertion of a belief in the resurrection of the flesh in the Old Testament is that inspired utterance of God's servant Job, of whom He declared, "there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man." Familiar to us all is the use the Church makes of his words in the burial service, where the priest, speaking in the name of the departed, as he walks before the casket, says: "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth. And though, after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God; Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold and not another."

Then examine the teachings of the New Testament before our Lord's Resurrection. His conversation with the Sadducees, and His words to Martha, all declare a resurrection of

the flesh, not a mere spiritual arising. Again, referring to the Burial Service, we have the opening sentence in the very words which He spoke to Martha, and still speaks to all mourners through His priests. "I am the Resurrection and the Life, saith the Lord: he that believeth in Me though he were dead yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die."

The burden of the apostles' preaching was the Resurrection. Take the fifteenth chapter of Corinthians, and carefully study every text that bears upon the subject. Also notice in the eighth chapter of Romans, "We ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body."

In the other Epistles, and in the Revelation of St. John, we have a most abundant supply of proof texts, showing that we must appear in our bodies before the judgment-seat of Christ, to be punished or rewarded for the deeds done in the body.

Believing that we shall rise again, the question comes to us, as asked by St. Paul: "But some man will say, how are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?"

First. The initiatory rite which admits us into the Catholic Church is Baptism; "wherein," says the Catechism, "I was made a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven." Here we have the key-note of the resurrection of the dead. Where the head of a body is, there must the several members be. Christ, the Head, rose and entered into glory, hence those who are a part of Him must rise and enter upon a new life. Our membership in His Mystical Body is continued and preserved by feeding upon His most sacred Body and Blood, really and truly given unto us in the Holy Eucharist. Notice the sentence pronounced by the priest as he delivers the consecrated wafer into our hands: "The Body of our Lord Jesus Christ which was given for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life." It is not merely our spiritual life that is here fed; our *bodies* also are made one with His Mystical Body; we are partakers of His Flesh and Blood. The same words are said as the chalice is administered: "The Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ which was shed for thee preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life."

Right here comes in a thought which must be apparent to any candid mind. Our bodies need the holy Food; but if they have already been supplied by other food, the heavenly Manna loses, as a type, its full significance. So rightly, the Catholic Church, since the days of the Apostles, has bidden her children come to that holy Feast ere they have partaken of earthly food. Thus a belief in the resurrection teaches frequent and devout Communions, that we may become closer and closer members of that sacred Body, which is our pledge of eternal glory.

Further, as to the means by which the faithful shall be raised, St. Paul says: "He which raised up the Lord Jesus, shall raise up us also by Jesus." Again he says: "He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you."

Seeing that Nature and the Bible teach the resurrection of the dead, and that the means whereby we shall be raised are Christ and the Holy Spirit, we are brought to a third thought above quoted, "And with what body do they come?"

One thing we do know, for the Psalmist declares: "When I awake up after thy likeness, I shall be satisfied with it," and we pray that our vile body may be fashioned like unto His glorious Body.

We know that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, but St. Paul teaches us that our bodies are to be changed. "This corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality." For "as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly."

The body of our risen Lord was not bound by the laws of time and space; like a spirit, He came and went, vanishing or appearing as He pleased. He needed not to be sustained by food, yet He partook of both fish and honeycomb. In appearance His Body was the same, that is in form and feature. So our risen bodies will bear our own likeness, the likeness which our spirits have impressed upon them.

"For of the soul the body form doth take,
For soul is form and doth the body make."

"We shall," says a writer previously quoted, "carry our individuality into the next

world. We shall be identically the same persons that we are now. Hence that life is not so much another as this one prolonged. The life of the world to come begins in this world."

> "O, mortal form of heavenly birth,
> Thou shalt arise, arise from earth,
> Fleeting thy rest in dust shall be
> Born heir of immortality."

Sceptics concerning the resurrection claim that the body, changed into dust, or scattered to the four winds, cannot resume the same atoms and particles of which it was formed when consigned to mother earth. This weak objection is easily refuted. For the body we possess in youth and age contains not one atom that existed there when we were children. Yet do we not feel and say: "This is my body, the same that I have always inhabited?" Identity of matter does not of necessity constitute the same body. Faith and science need never conflict, and with God all things are possible.

Said a deep thinker upon scientific subjects, just before his death: "Yes, there is hope for the flesh, then the spirit of the matter becomes a part of the essence of the spirit of the *Ego*,

thus, and only thus, a glorified body, an absorption of the earthly spirit by the celestial. Thus are we raised from the dead."

In the words of a devout writer, shortly before her entrance into the unseen world: "We shall look into the same deep eyes, and clasp the same warm hands, and walk on beside the same beloved beings we have known here, our transfigured lives forever young with the youth of the angels." What the endless joy of that risen-life will be none yet may know. Keble says:

> "What is the heaven our God bestows?
> No prophet yet, no angel knows;
> Was never yet created eye
> Could see across eternity."

"It doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is." Then the purified body shall become the vehicle of the perfected soul, and man will have attained to his true destiny. The saints in Paradise look forward with patient but longing expectation for the joyful day to which we are hastening:

"On the Resurrection morning
Soul and body meet again;
No more sorrow, no more weeping,
No more pain.

"Soul and body re-united
Thenceforth nothing can divide,
Waking up in Christ's own likeness
Satisfied.

"Oh, the beauty, oh, the gladness
Of that Resurrection Day,
Which shall not through endless ages
Pass away!"

CHAPTER IX.

THE ASCENSION

"I will arise, and in the strength of love
Pursue the bright track ere it fade away,
My Saviour's pathway to His home above."

In order to strengthen our belief in the supernatural, the veil which separates us from the other world is from time to time lifted, in the sacred records; celestial messengers are permitted to make themselves visible to mortal sight; or through the prophetic visions of the seers, we are allowed to gaze within the heavenly portals. From the Scriptures we learn of the care which the angels have over us, and of the intense joy and interest with which they watch our earth.

They, who shouted with joy at the creation, announced the Nativity, and appeared in the heavens singing *glorias;* were present at the Resurrection, and finally came in myriads to accompany our Blessed Lord when the battle

having been fought and the victory won, He ascended in radiant glory far above all principalities and powers, to sit upon the right hand of the Ancient of Days!

"A radiant cloud is now Thy seat,
And earth lies stretched beneath Thy feet,
Ten thousand thousands round Thee sing,
And share the triumph of their King."

Many are the thoughts which cluster around this, the most glorious event within the realm of our knowledge. We learn of the Ascension from the prophecies in Daniel, and in the Psalms, and from its types, as seen in the translation of Enoch, and the going up of Elijah, that it was an event of transcendent importance. The falling of Elijah's mantle, and the bestowal of his spirit upon Elisha, was an emblem of the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples, after the Ascension. We learn from the Psalms what were the glorious words of welcome which rang through the courts of Heaven, as the triumphal procession of our Lord and His angelic host swept through the starry firmament.

Let us contemplate for a moment the historic event as seen on its earthward side. The

fortieth day after the Resurrection has arrived; our Blessed Lord meets His chosen, and leads them out beyond Bethany, that village so often honored by His presence, to Mount Olivet, a Sabbath day's journey from Jerusalem. Even those closest in thought and sympathy to Him, could have had but faint realization that He was going away, in order that the Comforter might come to illuminate their dull understanding, and lead them into all truth. Until the Holy Spirit should come upon them more fully, they were unable to comprehend spiritual mysteries.

For the last time the Master and His disciples walk along those familiar paths. He gives to them final directions concerning the things which pertain to the kingdom of God. Then He assembles them upon the mount; and overflowing with love for his dear disciples and for all who should believe on Him through them, He raises those pierced hands in Divine blessing. Then the Son of Man and Son of God rises by His own power up into the bright blue vault of heaven. Awe-struck, dumb with amazement, even the impulsive Peter finds no words to say. They silently gaze upon the fast

receding form, and see His dear hand still outstretched in benediction upon the world that had rejected Him. A cloud receives Him out of their sight; and still they gaze entranced in heart-felt worship, and lofty contemplation. Then angels in shining garments, sent back by the Triumphant King, announce to them that He who had promised to be with them to the end of the world, and had bade them wait at Jerusalem for the promised gift, would Himself come again in like manner, that is with the clouds and the angelic hosts.

And then the disciples, no longer doubting, but full of joy, knowing Christ no more after the flesh, but after the Spirit, returned to Jerusalem with the gentle and holy Mary, to wait for the descent of the Paraclete.

Very brief is the Gospel record of this, the greatest event in our Lord's incarnate life; but, hark! what song of praise is it that welcomes home the King of earth and heaven, and is wafted back to us, expectant and trembling mortals?

Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in.

Who is the King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty; even the Lord mighty in battle.

Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in.

Who is the King of glory? Even the Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory.

O clap your hands together, all ye people; shout unto God with the voice of triumph.

For the Lord most high is terrible; he is a great King over all the earth.

God is gone up with a shout; the Lord with the sound of a trumpet.

Sing praises to God, sing praises: sing praises unto our King, sing praises.

God reigneth over the heathen: God sitteth upon the throne of his holiness.

Onward and upward sweeps the grand pageant, and then is vouchsafed to us, through the vision of Daniel, the heavenly aspect of the Ascension:

"I saw in the night visions, and behold, one like the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of Days and they brought Him near before Him.

And there was given Him dominion and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve Him; His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."

Who is it that sits upon that exalted throne at the right hand of God? Very firmly must we grasp the belief that it is the Son of Man, as well as the Son of God. It is our Saviour, born of a pure Virgin, our Elder Brother, that is there ever to intercede for us, until on that day, when He shall come again with clouds and ineffable glory, to be our Judge.

"He has raised our human nature
On the clouds to God's right hand.
There we sit in heavenly places,
There with Him in glory stand,
Jesu reigns, adored by angels;
Man with God is on the throne;
Mighty Lord, in Thine Ascension,
We by faith behold our own."

All has been accomplished, the Nativity, the Agony, the Crucifixion, the Resurrection, the Ascension, are facts, and He Who was despised and rejected of men, and crowned with thorns, is now crowned with glory, and prays that we may be with Him in that glory.

"Crown Him the Lord of peace!
Whose power a sceptre sways,
In heaven and earth that wars may cease,
And all be prayer and praise,

His reign shall know no end,
And round His pierced feet
Fair flowers of Paradise extend,
Their fragrance ever sweet."

Shall those who profess and call themselves Christians, on such a day, the day of our Lord's exaltation, fail to render Him His due worship? When angels, whom He never redeemed, fall down and worship Him, shall we be unmindful of our holy obligation and privilege to adore Him where He is to be found on His Altar Throne?

Shall we not join in spirit with the whole company of heaven, with angels and saints, in one grand anthem of praise, saying: "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power and riches, and wisdom and strength, and honor and glory and blessing."

One special thought is voiced in our meditation upon the Ascension. It is the solemn truth, that as He went, so He will return. That day is not revealed, yet many devout hearts who are in touch with the secrets of the other world, seem already to hear the gathering together of the angelic hosts, the reading of the roll-call of the great army of heaven,

the preparations for the sound of the last trump; and they believe that not very far distant is the time when the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the heavens.

"Thou art coming, O my Saviour,
Thou are coming, O my King,
In Thy beauty all resplendent
In Thy glory all transcendent;
Well may we rejoice and sing;
Coming! In the opening east
Herald brightness slowly swells.
Coming! Oh, my glorious Priest,
Hear we not Thy golden bells?"

CHAPTER X.

WHITSUN DAY

(*Fiesta del Espirito Santo*)

"One, the descending Flame,
But many were the tongues of fire,
From one bright heaven they came,
But here and there in many a spire,
In many a living line they sped
To rest on each anointed head.
There, as yon stars in clearest deep of night,
The glory-crowns shone out in many-colored light."

In this blessed feast of the Holy Spirit, which is the birthday of the Catholic Church, the culmination of our Lord's Incarnation is attained. He ascended that the Third Person of the Ever Blessed Trinity might come down to earth and abide in the Church, uniting its members one with another, and all to the great Head, that we might be led into all knowledge, truth, and holiness forever.

The world keeps the feast of the Nativity,

and of the Resurrection; Christmas and Easter are names with which even the irreligious may be familiar; but the world knows not, and cares not, for the Pentecostal season—only the spiritual can delight in the refreshment of that day.

"The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." What does he who has always been blind know of the variations of color and light? Or what can one who is born deaf know of the subtle harmonies of music? And how can one whose soul is nourished by no spiritual food comprehend the joy of devout hearts, who abound in hope and love in the Holy Ghost? Thus it is that Whitsun Day, or *Pasqua Rosata*, as the Italians call it, is dear to the Church alone, and the world meddles not with the joy of that day.

"What greater gift, what greater love,
Could God on man bestow?
Angels for this rejoice above,
Let man rejoice below."

The Hebrew Scriptures are not lacking in

prophecies of the great Gift which should be sent to mankind. As in the sixty-eighth Psalm: "Yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove that is covered with silver wings, and her feathers like gold." And again: "Thou art gone up on high, Thou hast led captivity captive, and received gifts for men; yea, even for Thine enemies, that the Lord God might dwell among them."

Then how instantaneously was the following prophecy fulfilled, after the outpouring of the Spirit: "The Lord gave the Word, great was the company of the preachers."

The great event was also clearly foreseen by Joel, and the power of the Spirit was referred to by Ezekiel and others, while Isaiah enumerates six of the gifts of the Holy Ghost.

For ten days the little company of believers, with the Holy Mother, waited in that upper room, spending the hours in prayer and supplication for the Promised Comforter.

"As yet they but their vigil hold,
Not yet the Whitsun flowers unfold
Their full bright splendors. In the sky
The third hour's sun must ride full high,
Ere to the holy, glorious room
The fires of new Creation come;

Ere on weak hearts, though willing, fall
The rushing, mighty wind, in all
The power of its dread harmony, and win,
Ne'er to lie down, true echoes from within."

Seven times seven days (a week of weeks), in reference to the sevenfold Spirit of God, had passed since the Resurrection, and Pentecost was "fully come." Throughout Holy Writ occurs the sacred number of seven. The rest on the seventh day, the seven candlesticks, the seven petitions in the Lord's Prayer, the seven words from the Cross, and the innumerable instances which occur in the Book of the Revelation, seem all to possess the same signification.

So graphic is the description of the outpouring of the Spirit upon the infant Church, as given in the Acts of the Apostles, that the imagination loves to dwell upon the wonderful scene. The sound, like a rushing, mighty wind, the cloven tongues, the supernatural utterances vouchsafed to all, the amazement of the beholders, the mocking of the unconverted, St. Peter's great sermon, the conviction of his hearers, the Baptism of the three thousand souls, all followed in quick succes-

sion. "The Spirit of the Lord filleth the world, and that which containeth all things hath knowledge of the Voice."

What a contrast the betrayal, the cowardly denial, and the forsaking of our Lord present when placed side by side with the intrepid conduct of the newly inspired Apostles! What greater proof of the indwelling presence of the Spirit could be vouchsafed, than is seen in the miracles, the gift of tongues, the powerful preaching, the insight into Scriptures, and the willingness to suffer and die for the Lord Jesus, that animates the Apostles and disciples! From that little room they went forth, endued with supernatural power, to convert the world, and through them we have been brought from darkness and error into the true light.

The Holy Spirit was no transient guest, but came to abide in the Church forever. He is present in Baptism, He descends in sevenfold power at Confirmation, bestowing on us these precious gifts: Wisdom, whereby the mysteries of heavenly things are revealed to us; Understanding, whereby our minds are enlightened; Counsel, which imparts to us a

right judgment; GHOSTLY STRENGTH, to endure and suffer; KNOWLEDGE, to perceive the Will of God; GODLINESS, through which we hunger and thirst after righteousness; HOLY FEAR, that teaches us to shun sin for fear of losing the presence of the Holy Spirit.

In studying the Epistles, one is impressed with the very large number of references to the work of the Holy Ghost. By His influence love is shed abroad in our hearts: through Him we abound in hope, and are full of joy and peace, finding true liberty. We learn that we are sealed with the Spirit of Promise, even unto the day of redemption. Only by His aid can we pray aright; in Him we have fellowship, are sanctified, and receive the washing of regeneration. Through His grace we have communion with the departed saints. It is the Spirit who imparts to us the Christ Life, for it is by His power that the creatures of bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. But when one who has known the Holy Spirit, and has tasted of the powers of the world to come, goes astray, what says the Apostle? If they fall it is impossible to renew them again to repentance.

Blessed indeed to the Church as a body, and to individuals as members, has been the fulfilment of our Lord's gracious promise to send to us a Comforter who should lead us into all truth. It is not of Himself, the Blessed Spirit speaks, but it is Christ whom He glorifies. "For," said our Lord, "He shall receive of Mine, and shall shew it unto you."

The Church teaches us to render due homage to the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity, and in the Creed we say: "Who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified." But do individuals fully grasp the truth that He is a real Person, and not merely a Love or Force proceeding from the Father to the Son? That He really dwells within each pure and contrite heart, and that our bodies are His temples?

"And His the gentle voice we hear,
Soft as the breath of even,
That checks each thought, that calms each fear,
And speaks of heaven."

Loving, persuasive, and tender is the ministry of the Spirit, yet in stern and awful warning stands the most terrible threat that can be

found in Holy Writ, for him who rejects His Voice, and it falls from the tender lips of our Saviour: "Whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come." That is the one final sin, for whosoever commits it is so hardened, so lost, that he cannot repent.

All nature seems fairer and brighter to the soul with whom dwells the Blessed Spirit. There are heavenly tints in the sunsets, celestial shades of blue on sky and ocean; every blade of grass, and every viewless wind that blows, speak of the gentle influences of the all-pervading and all-embracing Spirit.

> "How do wild Nature's chords by thee
> Combined in varying melody,
> Make tunes for holy times."

And when the eye of faith is thus purged of this world's desire for glitter and show, and has learned to look with love upon humanity and nature as all redeemed by the Christ and sanctified by the Spirit; and when the soul can yield in everything to the Divine Will, then its task on earth is finished, its warfare is

accomplished, and to such a one the call will soon come to enter into the glorious rest that remaineth for the people of God.

"O loving Spirit, gently lay
Thine arm on ours when we would stray!
Prepare us with Thy warnings sweet,
Us and our little ones, to greet
Thy visitations dread and dear!
Grant us, when holy times are near,
In twilight, or of morn or eve,
Thy dove-like whisperings to receive,
And own them kindlier for the plaintive mood,
That breathes of contrite love, mild hope, and joy subdued."

CHAPTER XI.

TRINITY SUNDAY

"When heaven and earth were yet unmade,
When time was yet unknown,
Thou, in Thy bliss and majesty,
Didst live and love alone.

How wonderful creation is,
The work that Thou didst bless;
And, oh, what then must Thou be like,
Eternal Loveliness!

Most ancient of all mysteries,
Low at Thy throne we lie,
Have mercy now, most Merciful,
Most Holy Trinity!"

The reception of truth must be gradual. The Church leads us step by step from Advent to Trinity Sunday. In Advent is heralded the miraculous Birth of a wondrous Child; at Christmas the heavenly host proclaims from the starry firmament "the good tidings of great joy;" on Epiphany the Christ is manifested to the Gentiles; through Lent we enter

into our Saviour's Temptation; in Gethsemane we witness His agony; on Good Friday we see the God-Man die for us, and are forced to cry with the centurion, "Truly this was the Son of God!" On the glorious Feast of Easter we see Him rise triumphant from the grave, "bearing in His pierced hands the keys of hell and of death." Then, on Holy Thursday, we behold His glorious Ascension to the highest heavens, there to sit at the right hand of the Father; while on Whitsun-day we are taught that the Comforter, even the Spirit of Truth, has come to dwell in the Church and in our hearts forever!

Thus does the Church prepare us for the culmination of her teaching, enabling us to grasp by faith the mystery of the doctrine of the Trinity.

> "Along the Church's central space
> The sacred weeks with unfelt pace,
> Have borne us on from grace to grace."

But such a profound and unfathomable mystery none can dare contemplate without awe and humility. Sinful creatures must prostrate themselves where even "angels bow and

archangels veil their faces." The Trinity in Unity is the highest mystery that is revealed to us. We can know nothing of God save as He reveals it. He is the True Light. And as a single ray of pure, white light is one and entire, yet may be separated into its three primary colors, each one glowing in its own beauty, so do we behold in our God, Three Holy Persons, who are yet one in their ineffable beauty and Majesty, one in Substance and equal in Power and Glory. "The doctrine of the Trinity is the verity of the Gospel," says one of our bishops. What is the doctrine of the Trinity? Are we taught it in the Old and New Testaments? Can we learn it by analogy? Do we know it subjectively by our inner spiritual consciousness, as strengthened by faith?

"The Catholic Faith is this: That we worship one God in Trinity and Trinity in Unity. Neither confounding the Persons, nor dividing the substance." Thus speaks that bulwark of our Faith, the Athanasian Creed.

The Scriptures reveal no doctrine more plainly than that of the Trinity. Take the very first verse of the first chapter of Genesis:

"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." In the original, the noun is in the plural number, indicating more than one Person. In the second verse we read, "The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." In the same chapter it is said, "Let us make man in Our image, after Our likeness;" and in the third chapter, the Messiah is promised to Eve. In the vision of Isaiah, the prophet saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and heard the seraphim with their veiled faces hymning the Trisagion, "And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of Hosts." The Psalter, also, is replete with references to the Three Persons of the Blessed Trinity. In the New Testament, from St. Matthew to the Revelation of St. John, this doctrine is most plainly taught. At the Annunciation, God the Father sends the angel Gabriel to announce the Incarnation of God the Son, by the power of God the Holy Ghost. At the Baptism of our Blessed Lord, the Father speaks from heaven, the Holy Spirit descends in the form of a dove and rests upon the Son, and thus are the three Persons openly revealed.

Our Lord promises the Holy Spirit, who shall come from the Father, and He also commands that all Baptisms shall be performed in the Name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost. The sacred number of *three*, which runs like a golden thread through all Holy Writ, is symbolical of the Trinity, as the number *seven* is a type of the sevenfold Spirit.

Throughout the Epistles this doctrine is so plainly taught that none, save the wilfully blind, can study them and yet reject the truth. "There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one." And again: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all." No one can refute the teaching of the Gospels and Epistles on this subject. They are incontrovertible.

Then study that vision which that saint of saints beheld when in exile in the isle of Patmos: "Behold a throne was set in heaven, and One sat on the throne. And He that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone, and there was a rainbow round about the

throne like unto an emerald." St. John saw the same rainbow that Ezekiel did, of which our earthly one is a type; for our bow of promise is an earnest of the glory which shall be revealed, a glimpse as it were of heavenly things. But further: "There were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God." Like Isaiah, St. John sees the living creatures with their six wings, who rest not day nor night, saying "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty." And then, O wondrous sight, the seer beholds in the midst of the throne "a Lamb as it had been slain." Ah! is not this He who was slain for us from the foundations of the world? The Apostle gazes upon the vision, and the whole company of heaven prostrate themselves before the Lamb, whose seven horns and seven eyes represent the sevenfold Spirit of God, which is sent forth unto all the earth.

"The four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odors, which are the prayers of saints." Hearken to their heavenly song: "Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof;

for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people and nation." And then St. John sees many angels joining with the elders: "And the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands; saying, with a loud voice: 'Worthy is the Lamb that was slain.'" In addition to all this: "Every creature which is in heaven and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I, saying, 'Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever!'"

What part or lot in this heavenly adoration can those have who would rob our Lord Jesus Christ of His divinity, His equality with God the Father? Surely there is no place for them among the company of the redeemed.

Can we learn anything in regard to this mystery by analogy? Each individual consists of soul, body, and spirit, yet they constitute but one man. Our mental nature possesses intellect, affections, and will. The family is represented by father, mother, and child (or chil-

dren). In nature there are three great divisions:

> "Earth's triple frame, land, air, and sea
> Upraise their canticle to Thee."

But to the children of the Church, trained in holy teaching, fed at her altar with heavenly food, there is a great and profound proof, the subjective knowledge that comes from faith. "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." Yes, it is the Blessed Spirit that gives to us such wisdom and knowledge that we can comprehend heavenly mysteries. Argument and reason are of little weight before the powerful and convincing knowledge which faith inculcates. "We know in whom we have believed." Faith lifts us up to heavenly places, where we may see and hear such marvellous things that the siren voices of this world are drowned forever. "It listens for the notes of heaven, the faint echoes which scarcely reach the earth, and it thinks them worth all the louder sounds of cities or of schools of men."

> "The greater height our graces reach,
> The clearer they the mystery teach;

Saints, best in their own souls may read
The illustration of their creed."

Believing in the Holy Trinity, we rise into a full appreciation of the *Te Deum.* "The Father of an infinite Majesty; Thine Adorable, True, and Only Son; also the Holy Ghost, the Comforter."

The world, the sceptical spirit of the age, the so-called culture, hard and cold, the investigations of would-be scientists, and the narrow minds of the higher critics, would rob us of this faith. So we pray in the ancient collect of the day, "Keep us steadfast in this faith."

On Trinity Sunday we must rise out of ourselves; we must dwell not so much upon God's mercies to us, infinite as they are, but, forgetting ourselves, we must think upon the glorious majesty of Him who dwells in light which no man can approach unto; He, who with the Son and the Holy Spirit reigns without beginning or end, in whom is such Beauty, Grace, and Purity, that we cannot comprehend it! "Even from everlasting to everlasting Thou art God."

We do well to meditate upon His surround-

ings and upon that wondrous throne, from which issues forth a golden stream of fire; before which lies the crystal sea, and on that sea stand the whole company of the redeemed. We forget the world with its petty trials, its mistakes, and incessant warfare, and in all humility we gaze upon the Triune God, until, by contemplating Him, we grow to imitate Him.

> "And faith will bear thee on her wings
> Almost to where the angels live."

By contemplation we gain the power to suffer, to persevere, and to worship. And we can only learn how to contemplate by habitually frequenting the Altar, where we join with the invisible company who "stand on the sea of glass mingled with fire," and sing the thrice Holy to the Blessed Trinity. And when for us that glorious day shall come, when Christ shall be acknowledged, and no longer rejected by a mocking world; and when all the redeemed shall be brought through the pearly gates into the golden city, then will the Church find her great reward in beholding the beatific vision which she longingly awaits.

" Then we'll reign in heavenly glory,
Then we'll walk in golden light,
Then we'll drink as from a river,
Holy bliss and infinite.
Love and peace we'll taste forever,
And all truth and knowledge see
In the beatific vision
Of the Blessed Trinity."

CHAPTER XII.

THE TRANSFIGURATION

"On Tabor, with the glory
Of sunniest light for vest,
The excellence of beauty
In Jesu was expressed.
O holy, wondrous vision!
But what, when this life past,
The beauty of Mount Tabor
Shall end in heaven at last."

—*Greek Hymns.*

The Transfiguration was a unique event in our Lord's earthly life. It brings us in touch with the unseen world. It revealed Him in His true heavenly aspect, and imparted to the Church a sure hope of the glory and brightness of His second coming in power and majesty, which the lapse of time cannot efface. (See II. St. Peter i. 16.)

A few days previous to this great event our Lord revealed to His Apostles the awful fact of His approaching Passion, and their faint hearts were unable to comprehend the neces-

sity of such a humiliation. The natural man always recoils from the mystery of suffering, and the impetuous St. Peter, speaking the thoughts of the others, exclaimed: "Be it far from Thee, Lord, this shall not be unto Thee." For which utterance our Lord rebuked him, deeming the suggestion that He should avoid the Cross, to have been prompted by the Evil One, who had before tempted Him in the desert. Our Lord's divinity had just been acknowledged by the disciples, and claimed by Himself as His right; that the Son of God should suffer such ignominy seemed inexplicable. Thus, after a few days, our Lord, reading their thoughts, knew that the time had come when unless they beheld some manifestation of His divinity, their feeble faith would fail.

After a day of toil, He called His three favored disciples, Peter, James, and John, apart from the turmoil of the noisy world, up the grassy slopes of Tabor, through fields of waving grain, past vineyards and olive groves, up to the summit of the mount. Beneath, lay the loveliest land on all the earth; the land Moses saw, as he stood on the summit of Mount

Pisgah; the land also of our Saviour's Birth, of His Death, Resurrection, and glorious Ascension; and the land on which His feet will stand at His second coming. But it is not to gaze on nature in her loveliness that the Blessed Jesus seeks the lofty mountain-top; it is to pour out His soul with " strong crying and tears " for a manifestation of the glory which He had with the Father before the world was. He desires it that the faith of His three dear companions may be strengthened, and that His own human soul may be sustained to go forth and meet the agony that awaits Him in the near future. And while the Man of Sorrows kneeled in prayer, the three disciples slept.

As Christ pleaded earnestly, the heavenly portals were thrown open, and " that light that never was on sea or land " flooded the mount with its glory; and our Lord, in white and glistening robes, as no fuller on earth can whiten them, with a countenance which shone as the sun, stood enswathed in glory; while with Him, also in glorious apparel, were Moses and Elijah, the representatives of the Law and the Prophets, ambassadors from the realm of departed spirits, sent to comfort the Son of

Man. "And spake of His decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem."

Surrounded by such glory the Apostles awoke, and St. Peter, feeling that here was a refuge from the wicked world, said: "It is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles; one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias."

But a still further wonder appears, for the cloud of glory, the Shekinah, by which the Father veils His majesty, overshadowed them all; and His voice declared, "This is My beloved Son; hear Him." Ah! what mortal can picture that glorious scene. Words are inadequate, only the devout imagination in the stillness of each individual soul can portray it.

"When in ecstacy sublime,
Tabor's glorious steep I climb,
At the too transporting light,
Darkness rushes o'er my sight."

"And when the voice was past Jesus was found alone," says St. Luke. But such fear had overcome the disciples that they had fallen upon their faces; and, says St. Matthew, "Jesus came and touched them, and said,

'Arise, and be not afraid.' And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only."

The vision was over, and as the Master and His disciples descended the winding pathway to the valley beneath, the rising sun looked wonderingly down upon the blessed mountain which had been singled out for the display of such celestial glory. Well may the Psalmist have exclaimed: "Tabor shall rejoice in Thy name."

Subjectively, the Transfiguration is of threefold interest to us. First, as a proof that our prayers for spiritual blessings are always answered. Second, as a revelation of the truth of the immortality of the soul. Third, as an evidence that spiritual joys are sent to enable us to persevere unto the end.

It is not derogatory to our Lord's divinity to say that His human nature shrank from the ordeal it had voluntarily chosen to pass through. But Christ always resorted to prayer as the most efficacious means of strength. His spending whole nights in prayer when physically as exhausted as His disciples, is an example to those who are content with very brief de-

votions, and seek to find consolation in the world (a gift which she can never bestow), instead of at the Altar Throne.

"Come, ye disconsolate! Where'er ye languish,
Come to God's Altar, fervently kneel;
Here bring your wounded hearts, here tell your anguish,
Earth has no sorrow that heaven cannot heal."

The prayer of the most blessed Jesus was immediately answered, for He always prayed with faith and earnestness. "Before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking I will hear." Truly prayer is the life of the soul. In it we place ourselves in the immediate presence of God, and are *en rapport* with the unseen world. It is to spiritual life what air is to the physical; without it the soul must languish and die, for, in the words of Cardinal Manning: "It is impossible for us to make the duties of our lot minister to our sanctification without a habit of devout fellowship with God. It is the spring of all our life, and the strength of it."

"Pray without ceasing" is the Apostle's injunction. In the appearance of the two great

types of the old dispensation, men who had lived more than one thousand years before, yet still preserving their own individuality, so that they were known by the disciples who had never seen them, we are taught the truth of the immortality of the soul; and the cry of the human heart, "If a man die shall he live again?" is answered beyond question of a doubt. The soul does not sleep after leaving the body, for here were two departed spirits, who were cognizant of earthly affairs, and also of future events, for they spoke of our Lord's decease, which had not then taken place.

The fact of their identity being recognized by St. Peter's spirit—for never having seen them his physical vision would not have served to tell him who these august spirits were—establishes beyond a doubt the recognition of our friends, and even of those we have not known when we shall meet them in Paradise. Says a devout writer: "The consciousness of our own personality, and the recognition of our fellow-beings, are among the foundation-stones of our thought of immortality."

We must remember that this vision appeared to these weary men, human beings like

ourselves. But they were with the blessed Jesus, and wherever He went myriads of angels and saints, though invisible, waited upon His footsteps, their presence known to Him, though veiled from the eyes of His followers. And even now, if we are with Christ, we too are waited upon by ministering angels and departed loved ones, whose presence, oft-times, thrills the heart with a consciousness of unseen companions.

The Transfiguration was a preparation for the final act in the drama of our Redeemer's life; it was a fore-shining of the glory with which He was to be invested when St. John should again behold Him in the isle of Patmos. It was also given to the disciples as a means to strengthen their drooping faith, and prepare them to witness their Master's agony in the garden and His death upon the cross. Oh! how these blessed foretastes, that are even now vouchsafed to Christians when in communion with our Lord, nerve the soul to endure the conflicts with the powers of evil whom they must encounter when they have descended from the mount of privilege. A Christian's life cannot be all vision, the days of depression

and sorrow will come if we follow our Master, and as the saintly Keble expresses it:

"If ever on the mount with Thee
I seem to soar in vision bright,
With thoughts of coming agony
Stay Thou the too presumptuous flight.

"Gently along the vale of tears
Lead me from Tabor's sun-bright steep,
Let me not grudge a few short years
With Thee toward heaven to walk and weep."

Christ charged His chosen witnesses to tell no man of the vision until He should rise. The command suggests the thought that spiritual experiences often lose their preciousness if freely talked of, especially before those whose lack of spirituality prevent their comprehending the truth. "Be very jealous, then, how thou speakest of the love of God to thee, or of the love which He giveth. It is the secret of the Lord. 'Thy secret to thyself,' it was said of old."

"They saw no man save Jesus only." When visions fail, and the unseen fades from our sight, we are not alone, for He is with us always; and when we descend from the mount

to the world of sin and suffering, represented in the Gospel by the child whose malady the disciples could not cure, He goes beside us, and leads us on in the path He and His saints have trod, the way of suffering, which brings us to the life eternal.

"'Jesu only!' In the shadows
Of the clouds so chill and dim,
We are clinging, leaning, trusting,
He with us and we with Him;
All unseen though ever nigh,
'Jesu only'—all our cry.

"'Jesu only!' In the glory,
When the shadows all are flown,
Seeing Him in all His beauty,
Satisfied with Him alone;
May we join His ransomed throng,
'Jesu only'—all our song."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE FEAST OF ALL ANGELS

" Thine angels, Christ, we laud in solemn lays,
Our elder brethren of the crystal sky,
Who 'mid Thy glorious blaze
The ceaseless anthem raise,
And gird Thy throne in faithful ministry.

" We celebrate their love, whose viewless wings
Hath left for us so oft those mansions high,
The mercies of their King
To mortal saints to bring,
Or guard the couch of slumbering infancy."

—*Bishop Heber.*

" The blessed angels," says a devout writer, " are not as stars above us, unconcerned spectators on their silent watches. One thing is mentioned of them by our Lord which at first hearing might well amaze us, namely, that the highest of these glorious spirits watch over the most humble Christian." Throughout Holy Writ, from Genesis to Revelation, we are taught lessons of their heavenly love for us,

their younger and fallen, yet redeemed, brethren. From that poetical and philosophical book, the life of Job, we learn that when the world was created "the sons of God shouted for joy." They were filled with rapture because the Triune God had unfolded to them one of His myriad plans, previously known only to the Three Persons of the Ever Blessed Trinity.

Before the fall our parents must have been in constant and visible intercourse with celestial spirits, even as our Lord Himself was when He walked the grassy slopes of Olivet, or sat beside the blue waters of Galilee. But though the fall lost the human race the visible companionship of the angels, yet their ministry to man never ceased; and often, during these thousands of years which have elapsed since the gates of Eden were guarded by cherubim with flaming swords, have they appeared to man in important crises of his life. And there is to-day such a thing as being in companionship with our angelic friends, with our dear guardian angels, who walk beside us from the font, until they conduct us safe into the blessed Paradise that awaits the faithful. How then

shall we obtain for ourselves and others the attendance of these loving spirits?

"Pray then, that angel ministries may stand
To gird thy loins, to arm thy feeble hand,
To prompt to holy thoughts, to urge the way
Of lowly duty, when thy thoughts would stray,
To guide thy feet in paths thy Saviour trod,
And lead through blest obedience to thy God."

A brief summary of a few of the angelic appearances in the Old and New Testaments may serve as an incentive to us to desire what may also be ours as members of the mystical Body of Christ.

Three angels appear to Abraham, in the form of men, and announce the birth of Isaac, and twice the angel of the Lord appeared to Hagar in her hours of distress in the wilderness. Two angels appear to Lot and warn him to flee from the doomed city. An angel came to Manoah and his wife, and to Elijah in the wilderness. By the prayer of Elisha the young man beholds countless angels and chariots of fire round about them. Surely, "the angel of the Lord tarrieth round about them that fear Him: and delivereth them." Jacob beheld a vision of many holy angels; Isaiah, Daniel,

Ezekiel, and other prophets held converse with them; and the vacillating, disobedient children of Israel were hourly watched over by these sons of God. All nations, heathen as well as Christian, seem to be under the care of these "holy watchers."

Then in the New Testament we read of their appearing to Zachariah, St. Mary, St. Joseph, the shepherds, the disciples, St. Peter in prison, and St. John in Patmos, to say nothing of their coming to comfort Our Blessed Lord in the wilderness and in the garden.

What consolation the faithful have derived from the fact, stated by our Saviour Himself, that the angels carried the faithful, suffering Lazarus to his rest in the bosom of Abraham. And so we pray to-day over our dying: "May the holy ones of God succor him, may the angels of God receive and bear his soul and present it before the face of the Most High. May the angels carry thee into Abraham's bosom."

Most beautifully does Cardinal Newman portray the love of the guardian angel for the soul he has watched and cared for, guarding it from temptation, and rejoicing when it re-

pented, for "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth."

"My work is done,
My task is o'er,
And so I come
Taking it home,
For the crown is won,
Alleluia! Forevermore.

"My Father gave,
In charge to me
This child of earth,
E'en from its birth,
To serve and save,
Alleluia! And saved is he."

And in another place—

"More than the seraph in his height of place,
The angel-guardian knows and loves the ransomed race."

How forcible a restraint to keep us from evil thoughts and deeds is the knowledge that a pure spirit, whose heavenly appointed task is to be ever by our side, listens to every thought.

"We cannot pass our guardian angel's bound,
Resigned or sullen, he will hear our sigh."

When overborne by care and temptation, and that longing for perfect purity and eternal rest which comes so oft to earth's pilgrims, how sweet the voice of our angel sounds in our ears. It is no myth or idle fancy; mortals have heard and do hear sweet words and strains of celestial music borne upon their souls from the other world. All Christians have their transfiguration moments when the soul is uplifted and strengthened to persevere to the end, in order to obtain the crown of life.

"Cheer up, my soul! Faith's moonbeams softly glisten
Upon the breast of life's most troubled sea,
And it will cheer thy drooping heart to listen
To these brave songs which angels mean for thee.
Angels of Jesus,
Angels of light,
Singing to welcome,
The pilgrims of the night."

We do not think enough about God's angels, and we should strive to imitate them in their character and work. One of their characteristics is implicit obedience to the will of God. They do not know a wish contrary to His commands. "Thy will be done on earth, as it is

in heaven," Christ taught us to pray. That is, we must obey lovingly and cheerfully every wish of our Master. A second characteristic is their perfect love for us, and the nearer they are to the throne of God, the more humble they are; even those who ever behold His face are yet willing to serve as guardians to the little ones. "Their angels do always behold the face of my Father who is in heaven."

Besides their ready obedience and their love, is their willingness to serve. "Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" "Be your strife to lead on earth an angel's life."

What, then, must we do if we would be like them and like the blessed saints who are their companions? First, obedience, ready and willing without questioning to obey all of Christ's commands; second, to have fervent love and charity for all; and third, to serve others by working for them, and by continual intercessions in their behalf.

One of the greatest evils of our age is the fast growing disbelief in the supernatural, in the reality of the unseen world that lies about

us. The majority of people do not believe in the actual ministry of the angels whom we lovingly commemorate at this time. Most beautifully does a poet of to-day thus comment on the angels and their blessed and holy work:

"But tell me, is the age of angels gone;
Treads man, to-day, life's upward path alone?
Is there no more the seraph's song to stir
The soul that bows a faithful worshipper?
And when to-day the lonely life cries out
Amidst the wilderness of grief and doubt,
Do angels raise their hands to hide their eyes
And haste impatient to their Paradise?
Is lot of man no more like Jacob's cast?
Is 'angel's charge' a sweet dream of the past?
Nay! For that word was written for all years
To lighten eyes acquaint with human tears.
How He shall give His angels charge o'er all
Whose lives in paths of earthly danger fall.
He folds to-day all human-hearted things
Beneath the shadow of His angels' wings;
Remember, ye, who read that faithful word,
The angel of the presence of the Lord
Still camps in place round sleeping Israel,
And in that place may man securely dwell.
Beloved, know, whate'er thy lot may be,
His angels hold their watches over thee,
In all thy ways to keep thee, lest alone
Thou dash thy careless foot against a stone.
'Tis ever so. As on one mother's breast,
Two sleeping babes in equal safety rest,

So earth and heaven on God's fond breast recline,
Enfolded by one hushed embrace divine,
Heaven smiles to God with glad and wakeful eyes,
But earth asleep dreams not that thus it lies
On God's own bosom while His loving arm
Its helpless form encircles from all harm.
But thou, beloved, learn it and declare
The golden truth to lift earth's needless care."

CHAPTER XIV.

ALL SAINTS' DAY

When the soft summer tints merge into the full, golden hues of autumn, and when the foliage, rich in its scarlet colorings, brilliant because the seal of death is already upon it, reminds us that change and decay are stamped upon all our surroundings, then are we forced to say with the saintly Keble: "Dreary were this earth, if earth were all." Yet in this season, sweet to us, because of the heavenly thoughts and aspirations it suggests, comes that precious day, so dear to all Catholics, the Feast of All Saints'; fit companion in its teachings to the subdued joy of Easter Even. As Easter Even tells us that since the Lord of all deigned to sleep within the gloomy portals of the tomb, we need not fear to lay us down to rest, so All Saints' Day shows us that those whom, in earthly language we call dead, are

not dead, but "alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

> "For death
> Now we know, is that first breath
> Which our souls draw when we enter
> Life, which is of all life centre."

Near as the dear departed saints are at all times to those whose lives are hid with Christ in God, yet on this blessed annual Feast the Church emphasizes the teaching of that precious clause of the Apostles' Creed: "I believe in the communion of saints." For the Collect says: "O Almighty God, who hast knit together Thine elect in one communion and fellowship, in the mystical body of Thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord." We do not ask that we may be knit with them when we are also called to the rest of Paradise, but the Collect declares that all the elect, that is the living and the departed, are knit now in communion and fellowship. How and why are the living and departed one, even now, notwithstanding the fact that they have laid aside the cumbrous weight of flesh, while we toil on, trying to follow them as they did our Lord, in "all virtuous and godly living?"

The Collect contains the obvious answer. They are one in Christ's mystical body. Do we not say in the thanksgiving after the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, "and that we are very members incorporate in the mystical body of Thy Son, which is the blessed company of all faithful people?"

Hence we see that it is not at the grave that we find our dear ones, but at the Altar rail. As has been said:

> "Here would we worship Thee,
> With saints, who round Thee wait;
> Who at the golden Altar stand,
> High in the heavenly, holy land."

Truly we shall find that

"Earth hath no sorrow that heaven cannot heal."

A devout writer of our day, whose thoughts reveal him to be in close communion with the unseen, has said: "It is comforting above all else that in immediate answer to our Altar prayer for God's grace, we may verily and indeed receive unto ourselves the Blessed Jesus, and that they who sleep in Him may know some electric thrill of our joy, that a dear van-

ished hand we so longed for we may really touch."

We notice in one of our hymns on the Real Presence these words:

> "Therefore I, my heart upraising,
> Kneel the Sacrament before,
> Contemplate His love amazing.
> And with saints and angels praising,
> On the Altar Christ adore."

Then in truth when we join with "angels and archangels, and all the company of heaven," our departed saints unite their voices with ours, nay, at our desire they may even kneel by our very side. Space and time are no barriers in the spirit life. If we are one with Him we are one with them.

> "O, my dear dead, mine own dear dead!
> Nearer than when on earth ye dwelt,
> I feel your presence by my side,
> Within my heart your power is felt.
>
> "O, my dear dead, my own dear dead!
> This blest communion binds us fast,
> In bonds of still increasing love,
> A love that shall forever last!"

Let the world's votaries mourn the death of those they love, but why should Christians

possess so little faith and trust as to grieve because the trials and the labors of their dear ones are ended? Should we not rather rejoice that their last tears have been shed, their last sins forgiven, and that they have attained unto a fuller knowledge of those heavenly mysteries, the exceeding greatness and beauty of which they thirsted and longed to understand?

"'Tis sweet, as year by year we lose
Friends out of sight, in faith to muse
How grows in Paradise our store."

Wilful sin only can separate us from those we truly love, if they have died in the Faith. So we must earnestly pray:

"Be with us this day; O fold Thine arms
Around us all!
That on the tumult of our soul's alarms
Thy peace may fall.

"So only can we feel our loved ones near,
Who sweetly rest,
In child-like confidence that knows no fear,
Upon Thy Breast."

Sickness and death are ever rife among us, and on each All Saints' Day new names

are added to the celestial calendar of the redeemed, and the *Nunc Dimittis* is sung o'er our loved ones; and ere another year shall roll away, our names may be written as citizens of that heavenly country; and before many an Altar may rise the petition for us, which we have offered for others:

"Rest eternal grant him, O Lord, and let light perpetual shine upon him."

"Oh, then the glory and the bliss,
When all that pained or seemed amiss
Shall melt with earth and sin away!
When saints beneath their Saviour's eye,
Filled with each other's company,
Shall spend in love th' eternal day."

CHAPTER XV.

THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS

" Beside the dead I knelt for prayer,
And felt a presence as I prayed;
Lo! it was Jesus standing there,
He smiled: ' Be not afraid! '

" ' Lord, Thou hast conquered death, we know;
Restore again to life,' I said,
' This one who died an hour ago.'
He smiled: ' She is not dead! '

" ' Asleep then, as Thyself didst say,
Yet Thou canst lift the lids that keep
Her prisoned eyes from ours away! '
He smiled: ' She doth not sleep! '

" ' Nay, then, tho' haply she do wake,
And look upon some fairer dawn,
Restore her to our hearts that ache! '
He smiled: ' She is not gone! '

" ' Yet our beloved seem so far,
The while we yearn to feel them near,
Albeit with Thee we trust they are.'
He smiled: ' And I am here! '

" ' Dear Lord, how shall we know that they
Still walk unseen with us and Thee,
Nor sleep, nor wander far away?'
He smiled: ' Abide in Me.' "

In those hours of anguish which come alike to each one of our race when, after having stood beside the casket that held the form of one whom we have loved, we have seen it lowered to its last resting-place, is there any ray of hope or light that can bring peace to our stricken hearts, save the hope of reunion at some distant day, and the belief that the faithful departed are in a state of happiness? The world would tell us: No; the majority of so-called Christians would tell us: No! The world and many well-meaning friends urge us to forget, to take up new interests, or to travel in feverish unrest from place to place, seeking peace in oblivion of the past. In their ignorance they tell us that it is morbid to dwell on thoughts of the rest that remaineth for the people of God. But " the air is full of farewells to the dying and mournings for the dead," and since " all that tread the globe are but a handful to the tribes that slumber in its bosom," it becomes the part of wisdom, and the

duty of a devout Catholic, to ponder much upon that home which is being prepared for us, and upon that heavenly country of which, even upon earth, we are citizens.

"Do we in this age," says the learned Dr. Staunton, "think enough of the dead? Are we not so afraid of what the world calls 'superstition' as to deprive ourselves of nearly all those consoling and joyous feelings which spring from a sense of our near relation to the Church above? We have lost, to a sad degree, our hold upon the spiritual world. We commit our departed to the earth, and then think no more of them as really living in another state, or as having any knowledge of our sorrows and trials. In other days, men who worshipped under our forms indulged far higher thoughts of the relations of the invisible Church to the visible. We have lost their habit of living on earth a celestial life, and are walking too much by sight and not by faith."

St. Paul says: "I would not have you to be ignorant brethren concerning them which are asleep." The cold, sceptical spirit of this age unfits us to cope with sorrow when it overtakes us. It has so permeated Christianity that thou-

sands who, though they believe in the immortality of the soul, and look forward to reunion with "the loved," and as they call them, "the lost," yet reject that wonderful consolation to mourners, the privilege of prayer for the departed, and have no belief in the "mystic, sweet communion with those whose rest is won." How cruel, how wanting in all natural affection, to pray for a loved one until the moment of departure, and then in prayer forever leave that dear name out! A Scotch Presbyterian minister writes thus:

"Why should our lips be
Sealed when they are dead
And we alone?
Idle? Their doom is fixed?
Ah! who can tell?
Yet, were it so, I think no harm could well
Come of my prayer;
And oh! the heart, o'erburdened with its grief,
This comfort needs, and finds therein relief. . . .
They will not grow
Less meet for heaven when followed by a prayer
To speed them home, like summer-scented air."

Does not the Catholic interpretation of that clause of the Apostles' Creed, "I believe in the communion of saints," teach us that we

may be one, in Christ, with our dear departed even here and now? "If the Church be a spiritual Body, living by the life of our Lord, then it is but one Body in earth and heaven, and intercourse between those here and there cannot be less direct and real than between those in this world, still fettered as they are by circumstances of time and space."

The teachings of the New Testament most plainly reveal the unity of the whole Church, the visible with the invisible. "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and run with patience the race that is set before us." And in another place: "But ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels . . . and to the spirits of just men made perfect." And again, we are made to "sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus;" we are, indeed, "fellow-citizens with the saints;" and we have but one Father and one Saviour, "of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named."

The early Church believed in, and accepted, her birthright, hence her children went joyfully to the fiery stake, and calmly to the horrors of the amphitheatre. For they "endured as seeing Him who is invisible." It is the loss of our faith in the reality of the unseen world that surrounds us, and in which we really exist (for "in Him we live, and move, and have our being"), that has given rise to what one of our bishops calls "the cruel blasphemies of Spiritualism."

Speaking of the belief of the early Christians, Bishop Wilkinson says: "They were taught to believe that the blessed ones who were delivered from the burden of the flesh, were not more 'in Christ' than they themselves were; that all were equally in 'the Vine,' knit together in one communion and fellowship in the mystical Body of God's dear Son." And in another place he says: "If God gives you grace so to do, at any time when He may call away from you those whom you love, if only you fall back upon your Bible, and cherish—by prayer to the Holy Spirit—the thought that the spirit is still with you, while you are looking at the body; that you are still

one in the fellowship of the saints; then that thought will become as much a part of your being as the knowledge that the Lord Himself is with you. . . . In the chamber of death you will at once be able to look at the body as separate from the spirit. You will think how happy that spirit is, and how it loves you and is with you still. And as you pass on to the grave you will have an unseen companion, while you are following that poor, earthly tabernacle!"

What can the world offer to mourners so blessed as these plain Bible truths thus explained by such a devout student of holy things? Who ever found rest from sorrow by plunging into the gayeties of the world, in hopes to drown the bitterness of an aching heart? Let us believe that:

"Those we love truly never die
Though year by year the sad memorial wreath,
A ring and flowers, types of life and death,
Are laid upon their graves.

"For death the pure life saves,
And life all pure is love, and love can reach
From heaven to earth, and nobler lessons teach
Than those by mortals read.

"Well blessed is he who has a dear one dead;
A friend he has whose face will never change;
A dear communion that will ne'er grow strange;
The anchor of a love is death."

Speaking on this subject, Cardinal Manning says: "Shall they love us less because they have power to love us more? If we forget them not, shall they not remember us with God? No trial then can isolate us, no sorrow can cut us off from the communion of saints. Kneel down and you are with them. Only a thin veil it may be floats between. All whom we loved and who loved us are ever near, because in His Presence in whom we live and dwell."

Oh, why should we speak of the faithful departed as dead? Surely Wordsworth's little "cottage girl" had grasped the truth when she reiterated her pathetic statement, "We *are* seven." "Not dead! They pass us in the street; they sit beside us in the hall."

What an incentive to live holy lives is the knowledge that our every thought is known to those who have been our companions on earth! How much nobler to have their approval than to be able to win the applause of this world, or

to gain the laurel wreaths of fame! But some may ask: "Are we really conscious of the presence of those, who, theoretically, we may believe are about us?" Ask the fond wife who has seen the love-light die out of her husband's eyes, as they closed to open on fairer scenes, does she not know him to be with her? Does she not see him and hear him speak to her, sometimes, as she plies her daily task alone, and sometimes in dreams so vivid that she instantly awakes?

"I met his eyes, I heard him speak,
I felt his breath upon my cheek.

"His hand-clasp thrilled me through and through,
His touch upon my lips like dew
Broke the vision of my sleep,
Roused me from my slumber deep."

Or, ask the young mother who has laid her darling to rest. Does she not feel, even though she cannot explain it, the sweet presence of her child, and the loving arms about her neck?

"Ah, God! it was long ago—
That musical voice so low,
And the little palm
Touching mine, so calm!
But still in the evening light,
Or at the deep midnight,

I can hear that whisper clear,
From spirit lips so near,
'My love, good night,
Good night!'"

"We may not know," says a devout writer, "all the spiritual ways of their mystic communion with us who fain would follow them, but the fact remains, and those whose lives are 'hid with Christ in God' know that it is no mere idle fancy, or vain illusion of an overwrought imagination, but an obvious and palpable reality." The stricken heart that wrote the following, needed such a ray of light from the Catholic faith:

"There is no comfort anywhere,
My baby's clothes, my baby's hair,
My baby's grave, are all I know.
What could have hurt my baby? Why,
Why did he come; why did he go?
And shall I have him by and by?"

Ah! could such a mourner have only known the sweet peace that would have sprung even from the little green grave she loved, she had never written thus. God grant that the eyes of such sorrowing ones—and their number is legion—may be opened.

In the spirit life there are no barriers of time or space, such as fetter the earth-bound soul. For, in the words of one who, as she neared the end, was vouchsafed a clear insight into the mysteries of heavenly things, " he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him, and He cannot be separated from Himself. The prayer of Christ to His Father for His friends was, ' that they may be one, even as we are One.' The children are no more apart from each other than from their Father, if they are doing His will, though they may seem to be sundered by the width of continents or by the silence of the grave."

Oh! let those who have not yet realized the nearness of the unseen world, pray that their eyes may be opened, that they may be enabled to feel the Presence of the Lord, with His saints and angels keeping watch around them, so that when the hours of darkness and bereavement come upon them, they may, by the eye of faith, pierce beyond the veil; then the rays of light from Paradise will fall upon them; and they may hear strains of celestial music, and so be strengthened to follow in the footsteps of the faithful departed, and become

" meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light."

Then pray for and with all faithful souls; do the will of God; desire the grace that comes from frequent and devout communions, and seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit; so shall you keep your dear ones near you; so shall you enter into rest even upon earth, and know what it is to be filled with that peace of God which passeth understanding.

CHAPTER XVI.

ALL SOULS' DAY

"Ev'n as we sing, by angel hands are borne,
Unto the haven of their Saviour's breast,
Souls that have languished in a world forlorn;
Grant unto them, O Lord, eternal rest."

It is the instinct of the human mind in times of great emotion, whether of joy or sorrow, to strive to pour forth its thoughts in verse. Hence we have so many poems upon love, and so many upon death; some written perhaps by those who never wrote or dreamed of writing until their hearts were stirred by the most intense rapture or grief. When those whom we have cared for pass out of our world, we love to think of them in that blessed rest of Paradise, supremely happy, but not yet complete, for they await the redemption of the body. "God having provided . . . that they without us should not be made perfect." It is a great consolation to the bereaved to

think much upon the state of the faithful departed, and the joys of Paradise, and to search the Bible for information upon the subject. We learn from the story of Dives and Lazarus, that there is a place of woe and a place of bliss; that in both memory, affections, and entire consciousness, still exist. We see from the Transfiguration that Moses and Elijah, though having passed hundreds of years in the other world, were yet cognizant of the affairs of this, and retained their own conscious identity. St. Paul, we read, was in a strait betwixt the desire to depart, which was far better, and the wish to remain for the sake of others. We know that "the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and there shall no torment touch them." And yet knowing all this we still weep and mourn and speak of the blessed ones as dead!

Sir Edwin Arnold writes thus in that sweet little poem, "After Death in Arabia:"

"Yet ye weep, my erring friends,
While the man whom ye call dead,
In unspoken bliss instead,
Lives and loves you; lost, 'tis true,
By such light as shines for you;

But in the light ye cannot see
Of unfulfilled felicity,
In enlarging Paradise,
Lives a life that never dies.
I am gone before your face
A moment's worth, a little space,
When ye come were I have stepped
Ye will wonder why ye wept."

And in "The Light of the World," he portrays Jairus' daughter as saying:

"Now weep not so,
Ye living ones! Ye too, shall pass! and then—
To grow so new and different! What is't?
Will men still call it dead? We lie abed;
And sleep; and seem on all our nights to die;
But the soul wakes, and plays between the bars,
Like a caged bird. Afterwards body wakes,
And soul's asleep or hiding! What surprise
For those who go feet foremost to the grave,
To learn the dream was day-time, light was night,
Gliding, soft gliding, to that greater life,
Which always was so near."

Death is like the shield with two sides; the side turned to us on earth bears a very different aspect from the side which is seen by the inhabitants of the other world. To us the angel of death seems stern, relentless, and unloving; but to those whom he has touched with his cold hand, he appears as an angel of mercy and

light. Jean Kenyon, in that sweet poem, "An Answered Prayer," pictures the man who prayed for peace, in preference to fame or riches, as affrighted when he saw the angel of death beside him, who thus addressed him:

"'Thy prayer is heard,' the angel said,
'Men pray for peace, yet death would shun,
Not seeing with their blinded eyes,
That death and peace are ever one.
Thy prayer is heard!' he said."

In the same strain writes that sweet poet, Nelly Hart Woodworth:

"If we could bridge the stream of life,
And, standing on the farther side,
Could see the loveliness that lies
Within the land of Paradise,
We should not dread to cross the tide.

"If we could see how sweet the flowers
That bloom within the Eden bowers,
Where life's immortal rivers rise,
Within the gates of Paradise,
We should not wish our buds to stay
Until their perfume died away."

Another writer speaks in these words:

"Death on earth is birth in heaven,
As the body dies,
To the waiting soul is given
Birth-right in the skies.

"Could we see the eyes first glow,
Hear the joyful cry,
Would it then so often seem
Terrible to die?"

Very beautiful are the thoughts upon death and the life beyond, which from time to time appear from the pen of Susan Coolidge; among which we note the following lines:

"Thank God for death; bright thing with dreamy name;
We wrong with mournful flowers her pure still brow,
We heap her with reproaches and with blame;
Her sweetness and her fitness disallow,
Questioning bitterly on the why and how;
But calmly 'mid our clamor and surmise
She touches each in turn, and each grows wise,
Taught by the light in her mysterious eyes.
I shall be glad, and I am thankful now."

And in another poem she says:

"Oh, sweet to her, the first, long, rapturous breath
Of heaven, after life's pent and poisoning air,
Freedom unstinted, power to will and dare,
The victory won from life and over death!"

One of the great consolations that our Faith offers to mourners is the absolute knowledge that the faithful departed are blest and happy,

even though they are not yet perfect. Our tenderest solicitude cannot shield them from trials and sufferings here upon earth, but there, their sins are purged away, and while we toil on, striving to complete our yet unfinished task, they are happy, they are with Christ, they are near us, and they know that their bodies will rest in the keeping of the angels until the last day, and then be forever reunited to their souls. Says an eminent writer:

"Every saint in heaven is as a flower in that garden of God, and holy love is the fragrance and sweet odor they all send forth, and with which they fill the bowers of that Paradise above."

Though we know that the body must turn to dust, yet it is right that every mark of reverence should be bestowed upon that body and its resting-place; for it has been redeemed, and we know that it shall rise again at the coming of our Lord, and be caught up to meet Him in the air. So the Church teaches us to have the last rites performed with blessed prayers, and reverently to lay the dear form in hallowed ground. A beautiful and unique poem by Eugene Field, "The Singing in God's

Acre," appeared not very long since, of which we quote one stanza:

" Out yonder in the moonlight, wherein God's acre lies,
Go angels walking to and fro, singing their lullabys;
Their radiant wings are folded, and their eyes are bended low,
As they sing among the beds whereon the flowers delight to grow.
'Sleep, oh, sleep!
The Shepherd guardeth His sheep,
Fast speedeth the night away,
Soon cometh the glorious day,
Sleep, weary ones, while ye may,
Sleep, oh, sleep!' "

There is an inexpressible feeling of peace and rest as one looks upon the quiet graves that lie about the house of God, a feeling that the body must sleep sweetly in that consecrated ground. These lines by a layman, long since gone to his rest, express what many feel:

" A home! a home! and a place of rest
Beneath the soft green sod,
Where the faithful sleep their last, long sleep,
Hard by the house of God!
Oh, I'd joy to sleep in that calm repose
The church-wall shadows fling,
O'er the dead in Christ, who lie around,
Freed from death's bitter sting."

These lines remind us of the familiar poem by Bishop Coxe upon "Churchyards," beginning:

"I never can see a churchyard old,
With its mossy stones and mounds," etc.

But yet wherever our own or our dear ones' forms may be laid:

"This only may we know—how far and wide
That precious dust be carried by the tide,
No mote is lost, but every grain of sand
Close-gathered in our Father's loving hand,
And made to build again—somehow, somewhere—
Another isle of life, divinely fair!"

Writing of the graves of dear ones, which she can see from her western window, Mrs. Moore speaks in these words in one of the stanzas:

"I can see the marble gleaming in and out among the trees,
Like the sheen of angel garments waving in the summer breeze,
Birds are singing,
Flowers are springing
Into pure and perfect beauty where the dear ones lie at ease."

But it is not from contemplation of the grave that mourners can derive any real con-

solation. There are but three aspects of the death of our dear ones that bring true comfort. Their own unspeakable happiness, the hope of reunion, when we too shall be called to enter into Paradise, and the belief in their present nearness as members of the same mystical body of Christ, in which, as the Collect for All Saints' Day says, we are knit together—there is much, as we have previously shown, that brings happiness to us in the knowledge

"That even now they ripen in sunny Paradise,
O summer-land of harvest, O fields forever white,
With souls that wear Christ's raiment,
With crowns of golden light."

There is also great joy in contemplating the reunion with all who have been dear to us. As the poet Whittier says:

"I go to find my lost and mourned for
Safe in Thy sheltering goodness still,
And all that hope and faith foreshadow,
Made perfect in Thy holy will."

And in another poem he writes:

"Yet love will dream and faith will trust
(Since He who knows our need is just)
That somehow, somewhere, meet we must.
Alas for him who never sees
The stars shine through his cypress trees;

Who hath not learned in hours of faith,
The truth to flesh and sense unknown,
That life is ever lord of death,
And love can never lose its own."

Our Lord said: "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." So we believe and know—there is no shadow of uncertainty in the matter—that if only we may attain to enter that happy land we will find our loved ones waiting and watching for us. But our Faith teaches us even more than this. "I believe in the communion of saints," we say in the Creed; and this precious clause teaches us that the land of our dreams and our longings is not far off, but lies near and around us; and this precious belief is a present and powerful assistance in days of affliction. In the words of a writer previously quoted:

"Not far away
The city where they walk to-day,
The undiscovered country where the friends
Are resting that walked with us yesterday;
And in our visions we their forms may see,
Because the veil is lifted when we sleep,
Angels come nearer then, their watch to keep,
And those we love speak low to you and me."

A devout writer says: "They may be nearer to us as they are nearer to the perfect love;

they may guide us to a holier and ampler freedom, since they suffer no more the limitations of time." Truly, as the Apostle says, "We also are compassed about with a cloud of witnesses." Very sweet are Mr. Loomis's lines on the mystic voices:

"Calling from the mystic distance,
Voices low and sweet I hear;
Night and day with strange persistence
Call these voices soft and clear.

"Then my soul is strongly lifted
Far above earth's petty jars,
By some sweeping current drifted
With the current of the stars.

"O my voices come still nearer,
Take me from the world apart,
Sing to me your songs yet clearer,
Make your home within my heart."

Writing upon this subject of the communion of all faithful souls, Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe says: "We are compassed about by a cloud of witnesses, whose hearts throb in sympathy with every effort and struggle, and who thrill with joy at every success. They have overcome, have risen, are crowned,

glorified, but still they remain to us our assistants, our comforters, and in every hour of darkness their voice speaks to us, 'So we grieved, so we struggled, so we fainted, so we doubted; but we have overcome, we have obtained, we have seen, we have found, and in our victory behold the certainty of thine own.'"

And in a poem the same writer thus expresses herself:

"Sweet souls around us, watch us still!
Press nearer to our side!
Into our thoughts, into our prayers,
With gentle helpings glide!"

With so much to strengthen us, let us believe and teach others to believe, that

"Death never separates; the golden wires
That ever trembled to their names before,
Will vibrate still, though every form expires,
And those we love we look upon no more."

Thus we see that we who believe in the teaching of the Church, know that death has lost its sting, and that when we are called to separate visibly from our dear ones, we may know they are in a state of happiness (if they

have been faithful here); and that in the future we shall all meet in the land of light and love, and be forever in His Presence, who is the Resurrection and the Life, for our Creed says: "I believe in the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE HOLY ALTAR

"Altar of God! My soul loves all thy brightness,
Thou art to me a thing divinely fair,
Emblem of hope and joy, thy mystic whiteness,
Shines through the night of sin and grief and care.

"Thou art the throne of God with man abiding,
Who then shall dare to lift his eyes to thee,
Save as He pleads for us, and we confiding
In His dear love, draw near from doubts set free.

"Safe for a time from all the world's confusion,
I yield my soul to thy dear silent charm;
With thee so near, doubts cannot make intrusion,
Passions are still, and fear yields no alarm."

—*Rev. F. W. Westcott.*

"The great Sun round which the spiritual life revolves," says the author of "Simple Meditations," "is Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. All heat, color, beauty, in the soul's life spring from the Altar-Throne, whence Jesus pours them forth with no stint-

ing hand on His children. This being so, it is well that we should turn our thoughts with devout reverence to the subject of Holy Communion, with the prayerful desire to know more of His love as shown in it." On the Holy Altar we have the perpetual Presence of our Lord, even as He promised when He said, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." The offering of the Eucharist is the only act of worship enjoined by Christ Himself, and hence is the most powerful form of prayer; for when we come to ask great favors of God we must bring an offering, and what offering can poor sinners make of themselves? But in this we offer the only sacrifice pleasing in His sight, even the Body and Blood of our Saviour.

The meaning of the word Eucharist is Thanksgiving; and we offer humble thanks to the Father for the wonderful gift of His Son, and through the Holy Spirit we worship the Lamb, Who is on the heavenly Throne, and yet is spiritually present on His Altar-Throne. The duty of every Christian is to worship, and here only can we learn how rightly to adore the ever Blessed Trinity. Were our eyes opened,

as were those of the young man who was with Elisha on the mount, we should see the Altar surrounded by myriads of holy angels and saints worshipping around Him Who graciously comes to bestow His own life upon us, His children. To the eye of humble faith many a bright vision has been seen about the Altar-Throne. And much more might be spiritually apprehended, if the devout communicant desired it with his whole soul.

"Angels kneel in breathless adoration
When He draws near, unseen by mortal eyes,
Lending their song in solemn celebration
E'en as we plead the mystic sacrifice."

The subjective consciousness of the Real Presence grows upon the communicant, perhaps only after years of waiting upon the Altar, although he may truly believe it intellectually. But when he first really feels the thrill and gladness of spiritual joys, then the world begins to lose its hold upon his heart.

"Then worship and adore,
For He is here!
Then love Him more and more
For He is here!

O Feast of priceless worth!
The Saviour's Death shown forth!
Yes, this is heaven on earth!
Jesus is here."

The uses of the Holy Communion are manifold; besides as a thanksgiving and as an act of worship we receive our Lord's Body and Blood in order to become members of that great body of which He is the Head, for belonging to that we may have part in the Blessed Resurrection, and be guests at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. Our Saviour Himself says, "Except ye eat the Flesh of the Son of Man and drink His Blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day."

And in the Revelation we read, "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection; on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years." Ah! who would wish to miss having a share in that Blessed Resurrection? We also receive the precious Food in order to grow more like our Master. The more frequently

we receive, after penitent Confession and with a devout heart, the more we gain the power of assimilation, and by the grace of the Holy Spirit we are able to overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil.

"Let each Communion raise me up
Another step to Thee.
Mount, mount my soul, the Blessed Cup
Will make thee fresh and free."

A third use of the Blessed Sacrament is the offering and pleading of the sacrifice of Christ's death, for ourselves and others. He pleads His Death before the Father in Heaven. We unite with Him, and plead the same Sacrifice, which was offered once for all upon the Cross.

"For His own dear members He is interceding,
Far above in light unseen by mortal eyes,
Yet is present now His faithful children feeding,
Giving His Own Self, the one true Sacrifice."

We intercede for ourselves and others. We may ask for any temporal or spiritual needs for those we love, knowing that all things are in Christ, as the Apostle says, "All things are

yours, and ye are Christ's." Do we yearn for the salvation of a loved one on earth, or the perfection of a dear one in Paradise? Bring the wish to the Altar-Throne. Is a loved one ill or far away? Whisper your desire for him at the Altar-rail. Are you in need of temporal blessings? Ask for them with a submissive will, if best they will be given. When we pray for others we are most like our Lord, for He spent whole nights in prayer.

"I tell Him all my weariness, I show Him all my grief,
The anguish that oppresseth me, the woe without relief;
And softly comes the answer back, as His servant draweth nigh,
To feed me with the Bread of Life, 'Be not afraid, 'tis I.'"

No balm is so healing for the wounded heart, no sedative so soothing as the pouring out of our desires at the Altar.

"And then for those our dearest and our best,
By this prevailing Presence we appeal,
O fold them closer to Thy mercy's breast,
O do Thine utmost for their soul's true weal,

From tainting mischief keep them white and clear,
And crown Thy Gifts with grace to persevere!"

Another beautiful and wonderful blessing is vouchsafed at the Altar, and that is communion with all of Christ's mystical Body, even those within the veil, who look down lovingly upon us, even though we may not be aware of their presence. Yes, we are surrounded by a cloud of witnesses. The priest bids us lift up our hearts, and we respond, "We lift them up unto the Lord." And then in heart, in spirit, and outward voice we join with the whole company of heaven in their ceaseless song of praise. Ah! could our ears be opened, and could we hear the "holy voices chanting o'er the crystal sea." Hark!

"So soft at first and sweet, then full and clear,
With blended voices of the ransomed throng,
Comes to our ears the angelic song of praise
For Him to Whom all glory shall belong.

"Our willing lips take up the wondrous strain,
Of praise and worship to the heavenly King,
And through the earthly veil we almost see,
The radiant glory of the Lord we sing.

"It dies away—but lingering in our hearts,
Those thrilling notes, with loving memories dwell,
Till round God's Throne, throughout eternal years,
Our souls, redeemed, that hymn of praise shall swell."

Where the Blessed Jesus is all His children are, whether severed by continents and oceans, or separated by the grave. In Him they are one, and are near each other.

Lastly, we do show forth the Lord's Death till He come. Until He, our Redeemer, our Elder Brother and our King, comes to gather His saints together, and to bring them in to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, of which the earthly Feast is but a dim shadow, though a foretaste of the Heavenly Banquet. For that coming He bids us watch, for it may be that at any moment He will return to take His Bride, the Church, unto Himself. And the angel said to St. John, "Blessed are they which are called unto the Marriage Supper of the Lamb." Of that glorious Feast our Lord Himself spoke, when He said, "I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until that day that I drink it new in the Kingdom of God."

"Thou art coming. At Thy Table
We are witnesses of this.
While remembering hearts Thou meetest
In communion dearest, sweetest,
Earnest of our coming bliss.
Showing not Thy Death alone
And Thy love exceeding great,
But Thy COMING and Thy throne,
All for which we long and wait."

So we pray, "Thy Kingdom come."

For nearly nineteen hundred years the world has seen those who love our Lord, and long for His appearing, hasten at the rising of the sun, before the earthly life, with its glamour, its temptations, and labors fill our hearts, to seek communion with our risen and glorified Christ at the Holy Altar. And there in the hush of the early morning, before food has passed our lips, or the cares of the day have pressed too heavily upon us, we find Him waiting that we may worship Him, as did the faithful women, who sought Him early at the sepulchre.

"He came in the morning, sweet and still
As the first sun-ray on some lonely hill,
From the splendor of heaven, from the awful
Throne—
Veiled and silent, He came alone.

And the few glad hearts that looked for Him,
In the pure, soft hush of the morning dim,
Had raised Him an Altar, and made it bright
With the loveliest gifts—with flowers and light.
The angels owned Him, an unseen throng,
But the silence stirred not with cry or song;
The great world slumbered, and none drew near,
But the few, to whom He was more than dear."

When the trumpet shall sound, and the dead in Christ arise, and the faithful in Paradise and on earth be called to the rapture of the saints and the Marriage Supper, God grant that none of those who have sought Him at His Altar-Throne be missing in that great Day when He shall make up His Jewels.

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